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# MODERN MARRIAGE AND HOW TO BEAR IT

BY

MAUD CHURTON BRABY

"Marriage is the origin and summit of all civilisation."—GOETHE.

*COLONIAL*

*(This Edition is for Circulation in the British Colonies only)*

SECOND EDITION

T. WERNER LAURIE  
CLIFFORD'S INN  
LONDON



TO

C. STANLEY CHURTON

THE BEST FATHER IN THE WORLD

WITH DEEP GRATITUDE

FOR A LIFETIME OF LOVING-KINDNESS



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## PART I

### SIGNS OF UNREST

‘The Subject of Marriage is kept too much in the dark  
—Air it! Air it!—GEORGE MEREDITH.



# MODERN MARRIAGE

## I

### THE MUTUAL DISSATISFACTION OF THE SEXES

‘The shadow of marriage waits, resolute and awful,  
at the cross-roads.’—R. L. STEVENSON.

EVER since the time, nineteen years ago, when Mrs Mona Caird attacked the institution of matrimony in the *Westminster Review* and led the way for the great discussion on ‘Is Marriage a Failure?’ in the *Daily Telegraph*—marriage has been the hardy perennial of newspaper correspondence, and an unfailing resource to worried sub-editors. When seasons are slack and silly, the humblest member of the staff has but to turn out a column on this subject, and whether it be a serious dissertation on ‘The Perfections of Polygamy’ or a banal discussion on ‘Should husbands have tea at home?’ it will inevit-

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ably achieve the desired result, and fill the spare columns of the papers with letters for weeks to come. People are always interested in matrimony, whether from the objective or subjective point of view, and that is my excuse for perpetrating yet another book on this well-worn, but ever fertile topic.

Marriage indeed seems to be in the air more than ever in this year of grace ; everywhere it is discussed, and very few people seem to have a good word to say for it. The most superficial observer must have noticed that there is being gradually built up in the community a growing dread of the conjugal bond, especially among men ; and a condition of discontent and unrest among married people, particularly women. What is the matter with this generation that wedlock has come to assume so distasteful an aspect in their eyes ? On every side one hears it vilified and its very necessity called in question. From the pulpit, the clergy endeavour to uphold the sanctity of the institution, and unceasingly exhort their congregations to respect it and abide by its laws. But the Divorce Court returns make

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ominous reading ; every family solicitor will tell you his personal experience goes to prove that happy unions are considerably on the decrease, and some of the greatest thinkers of our day join in a chorus of condemnation against latter-day marriage.

Tolstoy says : 'The relations between the sexes are searching for a new form, the old one is falling to pieces.' Among the manuscript 'remains' of Ibsen, that profound student of human nature, the following noteworthy passage occurs : "Free-born men" is a phrase of rhetoric. They do not exist, for marriage, the relation between man and wife, has corrupted the race and impressed the mark of slavery upon all.' Not long ago, too, our greatest living novelist, George Meredith, created an immense sensation by his suggestion that marriage should become a temporary arrangement, with a minimum lease of, say, ten years.

That the time has not yet come for any such revolutionary change is obvious, but if the signs and portents of the last decade or two do not lie, we may safely assume that the time *will* come, and that the present

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legal conditions of wedlock will be altered in some way or other.

Fifteen years ago there was a sudden wave of rebellion against these conditions, and a renewed interest in the sex question showed itself in an outbreak of problem novels—a term which later came to be used as one of reproach. Perhaps the most important of these was Grant Allen's *The Woman Who Did*. I can recall as a schoolgirl the excitement it aroused and my acute disappointment when it was forcibly commandeered from me by an irate governess who apparently took no interest in these entralling subjects. A host of imitators followed *The Woman Who Did*; some of them entirely illiterate, all of them offering some infallible key to the difficult maze of marriage.

Worse still was the reaction that inevitably followed, when realism was tabooed in fiction, and sickly romance possessed the field. *The Yellow Book* and similar strange exotics of the first period withered and died, and the cult of literature (!) for the British Home was shortly afterwards in full blast. There followed an avalanche of insufferably dull and puerile magazines, in which

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word *Sex* was strictly taboo, and the ideal aimed at was apparently the extreme opposite to real life. It was odd how suddenly the sex note—(as I will call it for want of a better word)—disappeared from the press. Psychology was pronounced 'off,' and plots were the order of the day. Many names well-known at that time and associated with a *flair* for delicate delineation of character, disappeared from the magazine contents bill and the publisher's list, whilst facile writers who could turn out mild detective yarns or tales of adventure and gore were in clover.

Signs are not wanting that the pendulum of public interest has now swung back again, and another wave of realism in fiction and inquiry into the re-adjustment of the conjugal bond is imminent. But the pendulum will have to swing back and forth a good many times however, before the relations between the sexes succeed in finding that new form of which Tolstoy speaks. What the revival I have foretold will accomplish remains to be seen. What did the last agitation achieve? Practically nothing; a few women may have been impelled to follow in the footsteps of Grant Allen's *Herminia*

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to their undying sorrow, and possibly a good many precocious young girls, who read the literature of that day, may have given their parents some anxiety by their revolutionary ideas on the value of the holy estate. But when that trio so irresistible to the feminine heart came along—the Ring, the Trousseau, and the House of My Own, to say nothing of the solid, twelve-stone, prospective husband—which among these advanced damsels remembered the sermon on the hill-top?

Yet in the fourteen years that have elapsed since the publication of *The Woman Who Did*, there have certainly been some changes. For one thing, it is still harder apparently to earn a decent living. Times are bad and money scarce; men are even more reluctant than before to 'domesticate the recording angel' by marrying, and a type of woman has sprung up amongst us who is shy of matrimony and honestly reluctant to risk its many perils for the sake of its problematical joys. Most noticeable of all is the growing dissatisfaction of the sexes with each other. Men do not shun marriage only because of unfavourable financial conditions, or because

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the restrictions of wedlock are any more irksome to them than formerly, but because they cannot find a wife sufficiently near their ideal. Woman has progressed to such an extent within the last generation or two : her outlook has so broadened, her intellect so developed that she has strayed very far from man's ideal and, consequently, man hesitates to marry her. There is something comic about the situation, and at Olympian dinner-tables I feel sure the gods would laugh at this twentieth-century conjugal deadlock.

Another reason why men fall in love so much less than they used to do is largely due to the decay of the imaginative faculty. As for women, although they are in the main as anxious to marry as ever, although it is universally acknowledged that the modern young woman does cultivate the modern young man unduly, their reasons for doing so are less and less concerned with the time-honoured motives of love. Marriage brings independence and a certain social importance ; for these reasons women desire it. H. B. Marriot Watson has put the case neatly thus : 'Women desire to marry *a* man ; men to

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marry *the woman*.' Nevertheless women are even now more prone to fall in love than are men, because they have better preserved this imaginative faculty, which is possibly also the cause of the disillusionment and discontent of wives after marriage.

The upshot of it all is that men and women appear to have become antagonistic to each other. However much they love the individual of their fancy, a kind of veiled distrust seems to obtain between the sexes collectively, but more especially on the part of men—perhaps because man is more necessary to woman than woman is to man. This hostility towards woman is particularly noticeable in the pages of the press. Scarcely a week passes but some journalist of the nobler sex pours out his scorn for the inferior one of his mother in columns of masterly abuse on one score or another. Each article is followed by a passionate correspondence in which 'Disgusted Dad,' 'Hopeless Hubby,' 'Browbeaten Brother,' and the inevitable 'Cynicus' express high approval of the writer, whilst 'Happy Mother of Seven Girls' and 'Lover of the

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Sex' write to demand his instant execution and public disgrace.

The range of men's fault-finding is endless ; one will assert that women are mere domestic machines, unfit companions for any intelligent man, and with no soul above conversation about their servants and children ; another that they are mere blue-stockings striving after an unattainable intellectuality ; a third that they are mere frivolous dolls without brain or heart, engrossed in the pursuit of pleasure, a fourth that they are sexless, slangy, misclad masculine monsters.

Judged by the assertions of newspaper correspondents, women are at one and the same time preposterously masculine, contemptibly feminine, ridiculously intellectual, repulsively athletic, and revoltingly frivolous. In appearance they are either lank, gaunt, flat-footed lamp-posts, or else over-dressed, unnaturally-shaped, painted dolls. Their extravagance exhausts expletive! When they belong to the class of society generally denoted with a capital S, they invariably smoke, drink, gamble and swear. They neglect their homes and their children. They have little principle and less sense, no

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morals, no heart and absolutely *no* sense of humour !

'But,' the observant reader may possibly exclaim, 'there is nothing new about this. Woman has ever been man's favourite grumble-vent, from the day when the first man got out of his first scrape by blaming the only available woman !' True enough, age cannot stale the infinite variety of women's misdemeanours, as viewed by men ; tradition has hallowed the subject, custom carries it on ; and probably when the last trump shall sound, the last living man will be found grumbling loudly at the abominable selfishness of woman for leaving him alone, and the last dead man to rise will awake cursing because his wife did not call him sooner !

But formerly man's fault-finding was more of the nature of genial chaff, as when we affectionately laugh at those we love. There was nearly always a certain good humour about his diatribes, which now is lacking. In its stead can be noted a bitterness, a distinct animus. Men apparently take with an ill-grace women's rebellion against the old man-made conditions, and they retaliate by falling in love less frequently, and showing

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still more reluctance to enter the arena of matrimony.

Nevertheless, they get there all the same, albeit in a different spirit. Timorous and trembling, our faint-hearted modern lovers gird on their new frock-coats and step shrinkingly into the arena where awaits them—radiant and triumphant — the determined being whose will has brought them thither. No, not *her* will, but the mysterious will of Nature which remains steadfast and of unswerving purpose, indifferent to our sex-warfare and the progress of our petty loves and hates. The institution of marriage battered, abused, scarred with countless thousands of attacks, stained with the sins of centuries still continues to flourish, for, as Schopenhauer says: '*It is the future generation in its entire individual determination which forces itself into existence through the medium of all this strife and trouble.*'

The *Will-to-Live* will always have the last word !

## II

### WHY MEN DON'T MARRY

‘If you wish the pick of mankind, take a good bachelor and a good wife.’

‘There is probably no other act in a man’s life so hot-headed and foolish as this of marriage.’

—R. L. STEVENSON.

‘Whatever may be said against marriage, it is certainly an experience.’—OSCAR WILDE.

‘All the men are getting married and none of the girls,’ a volatile lady is once reported to have said, and one understands what she meant to convey. In a newspaper correspondence on marriage I once noted the following significant passage: ‘*But in these days it is different from what it was when I was a girl. Then every boy had his sweetheart and every girl her chap. Now it seems to me the boys don't want sweethearts and the girls can't get chaps. For one youth who means honestly to marry a girl, you will find twenty whose game is mere flirtation, regardless*

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*of how the girl may be injured. The times are ungallant and they want mending.'*

This letter is signed 'A Workman's Wife,' but it bears ample evidence of having been written by a member of the staff, who seemed to consider sufficient *vraisemblance* had been given to the signature by the inclusion of an occasional vulgarism, such as 'chap.' But in spite of being penned to order, the statements expressed appear to be only too true. The times are ungallant indeed and growing more so every year.

Not long ago I was at a cheery social gathering where the non-marrying tendency of modern men was being discussed. Someone put all the men into a good humour with the reminder that 'by persistently remaining single, a man converts himself into a permanent public temptation,' and as there were fifteen bachelors present, the conversation naturally became personal.

One whom I will call Vivian, gallantly remarked that all the nice women were married, so he perforce remained single. I happen to know that he is deeply in love with a married woman. Another, Lucian, a very handsome and popular man of thirty,

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said he fully meant to marry some day, but wanted a few more years' freedom first. Dorian gravely asserted that he was waiting for my daughter (aged eighteen months), but being in his confidence, I know that his case is similar to Vivian's. Hadrian's health would make his marriage a crime ; we are all aware of that fortunately, so no one asked him. The same discretion was observed with regard to Julien of whom it is well known that he has formed an 'unfortunate' attachment and has practically not the right to marry. Florian was jilted years ago, and is shy and distrustful of the sex, which is a great pity, as he is the kind of man born for fireside and nursery joys, and would make a wife very happy.

Of Augustin and Fabian it may be truly said that 'the more they have known of the others, the less they will settle to one ;' and indeed I fear they have spoilt themselves for matrimony, unless there is truth in the old saying that a reformed rake makes the best husband. Endymion is altogether too ineligible, his blue eyes and broad shoulders being his only fortune ; he makes plenty of capital out of these adjuncts : they bring him

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in a rich return of feminine favour, but are nevertheless hardly sufficient to support a wife.

Claudian is really anxious to marry, but suffers from a fatal faithlessness and, as he engagingly explains, can't love a girl long enough to get the preliminaries settled. One day he is sure to be caught by some determined and probably very unsuitable woman and led reluctant to the altar. Galahad won't marry until he has found 'the one woman,' and I fear he will prove a husband wasted, for poor Galahad already wears spectacles and a bald spot; his devotion to an unrealisable ideal bids fair to spoil his life.

When I put the question to Aurelian, he smiled his evil smile, which makes him more like an embittered vulture than ever, and remarked that he was thinking over his offers and hadn't yet decided which was the best. As the fact that he has been refused by seven women is well-known, we really rather admire the persistence of his pose as a lady-killer. He has even been known to write passionate letters to himself, in an assumed hand, and drop cleverly-manufactured tears

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here and there upon them, to give an air of greater realism to these amorous masterpieces, which he uses as a proof of his wild stories of conquest. When dry, the tears look most life-like; of course it is a dodge that every schoolgirl knows, but I have never known a man have recourse to it before, and hope never to again!

Both Cyprian and Valerian gave as the reason for their continued bachelorhood, the fact that they were too comfortable as bachelors and had never felt the need of a wife. The latter added that if he could find just *the* girl, he would think it over, but as matters stood he preferred certainty to chance and was taking no risks. Between ourselves, both these two are very self-satisfied and egotistical persons, and I don't think any woman has lost much by their resolve.

The fourteenth man was Bayard, who belongs to a very exasperating type of philanderer. Most women of the world have met and been bored by him to their sorrow. It is his grievous habit to go about professing a yearning for matrimony of the most ideal kind, and confiding at great length to safely attached young matrons how he longs to

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find a home in one good woman's heart, and what a great, pure, passionate, wild love he is capable of. There is something rather engaging about him, and his pose is naturally very attractive to unsuspecting spinsters. He is always getting desperately entangled, but makes a great parade of his poverty when the *affaire* reaches the critical point, and wriggles out successfully—generally without any too unpleasant explanation. If, however, things have gone too far for this, he can always make good his escape under cover of the 'I love you too much, darling, to drag you down to poverty' plea. How many girls, wounded to the heart's core, have listened to this hoary lie when they are more than willing to be poor, if but with him, willing to economise and save, and forego for his sake.

Not, of course, that Bayard and his like inspire such devotion; I mean that the essentials of this particular excuse are given by very many unmarried men nowadays as the reason of their single state. Generally speaking, there are two main reasons why men do not marry: 1. Because they have not yet met a woman they care for suffi-

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ciently ; 2.—and these constitute a large majority—because they are too selfish. Of course men don't spell it that way. Like Bayard, they say they 'can't afford it.' They think of all the things they would have to give up—how difficult it is to get enough for their pleasure now, how impossible it would be then, with the support of a wife and potential family added ; how they would hate having to knock off poker, find a cheaper tailor, and economise in golf balls. They shudder at the prospect, and decide in the expressively vulgar parlance of the day that it's 'not good enough.' The things that are beyond price are weighed against the things that are bought with money—and found wanting !

It would, however, be the last word of foolishness to encourage improvident marriages, already a source of so much misery, and of course my remarks do not apply to the genuine poverty of the man who really cannot afford to wed. For him I have a very real sympathy, since he is missing the best things of life probably through no fault of his own. The above strictures are intended solely for the man of moderate means,

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who could afford to marry if he loved himself less and some woman more. Five hundred a year, for instance, is a comfortable income for a bachelor not in the inner circle of Society. On this sum a middle-class man can do himself well, provided he has no particularly expensive vices or hobbies—but it certainly means self-denial when stretched to provide for a wife and two or three children. It means a small house in one of the cheaper suburbs, instead of a bachelor flat in town, 'buses instead of cabs, upper boxes instead of stalls, a fortnight *en famille* at Broadstairs instead of a month's fishing *en garçon* in Norway. It means no more suppers at the Savoy, no more week-ends in Paris, no more 'running' over to Monte Carlo ; but it *can* be done, and done happily, provided a man puts love above luxuries. Almost every man can afford to marry—the right woman !

Of course, if a man has still to meet the woman of his fancy, all is well, but it is the despicable plea of Bayard that so incenses me. If men would own the truth, it would not be so bad, but, Adam-like, as usual, they lay the blame on women and say : ' Girls expect so much nowadays, it is impossible to make

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enough money to satisfy them.' This is one of the many lies men tell about women, or perhaps they are under a delusion and really believe the statement to be true. Let them be undeceived, girls *don't* expect so much ; they are perfectly willing to be poor, as I have said before, if only they care for the man enough. At anyrate, once they have reached that stage of wanting the real things of life they would sooner have wifehood and comparative poverty than ease and empty hearts in their parents' home. They would sooner, in short, be 'tired wives than restful spinsters.'

Another delusion men spread about women is that they're too fond of pleasure to settle down. How often one hears statements such as 'Juno Jones wouldn't make a good wife, she's out all day playing golf ;' or 'I couldn't afford to marry Sappho Smith, she's too fond of dress and theatre-going.' God bless the man ! What else have the poor girls to do ? Sappho has a taste for dainty clothes and a love for the theatre ; she fills her empty existence with these things as far as she can ; Juno has nothing in the wide world to do all day long, but she loves the open air, and so concentrates her magnificent

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energies on a game with a stick and ball, because any active part in the great game of life is denied her. Marry her—if she will have you—and see what a grand comrade she will make, and what splendid children she will bear you. Or marry Sappho, and you will find she will never want any but simple pleasures within your means, as long as you are kind to her and adore her as she requires to be adored. She will cheerfully make her own clothes, and find her greatest joy in planning out your income and adorning your home.

Everyone can recall having known frivolous and pleasure-loving girls settle down into admirable wives whose nurseries are models and whose households are beyond reproach. Doubtless their friends all predicted disaster when these butterflies were led to the altar. I honestly believe women only want extravagant pleasures when they are miserable. It is generally the wretched wives, the unhappy, restless spinsters who run up bills and fling away money. They feel that life is cheating them and they must have some compensations.

But to return to my fifteen bachelors. There only remains Florizel, whose attitude

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towards wedlock is a blend of that of Bayard and Claudian. He is genuinely eager to marry, ardent, affectionate, anxious to do right, but lacking in moral courage and egotistical to the point of disease. I would much like to see him happily wedded, as he then would doubtless quickly lose that intense self-centredness, but I question if any attractive woman exists who would be unselfish enough to cope with him in his present state of egomania. His mind is always inflamed with some woman or other, and he hovers about on the edge of desperate *amours*, anxious to fall head over ears into the sea of love and cast out an anchor of matrimony to hold him fast where he can swerve no more. Unfortunately he cannot forget himself enough to take the fatal plunge. With all his faults there is something very lovable about Florizel, and I should like to see him knocked into shape, though it would be a brave and patient woman who would take the task in hand.

When all the fifteen bachelors had ceased to talk about themselves and settled down to bridge with the rest of the company, an old lady who, like myself, preferred to be a

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looker-on, came and sat beside me. 'How they *do* talk,' she said! 'But I can tell you why they don't marry, in six words, my dear: because they don't fall in love! And why don't they fall in love? Because the girls are too eager; because the girls meet them all the way—that's why! I've seven sons, all unmarried, and *I* know!'

NOTE.—It is interesting to note that Westermarck in his *History of Human Marriage* quotes a number of authorities to prove that among many ancient nations marriage was a religious duty incumbent upon all. Among Mohammedan people generally it is still considered a duty. Hebrew celibacy was unheard of, and they have a proverb, 'He who has no wife is no man.' In Egypt it is improper and even disreputable for a man to abstain from marriage when there is no just impediment. For an adult to die unmarried is regarded as a deplorable misfortune by the Chinese, and among the Hindus of the present day a man who remains single is considered to be almost a useless member of society, and is looked upon as beyond the pale of nature.

### III

#### WHY WOMEN DON'T MARRY

‘It’s a woman’s business to get married as soon as possible and a man’s to remain unmarried as long as he can.’—G. BERNARD SHAW.

‘Marriage is of so much use to a woman, opens out to her so much of life, and puts her in the way of so much more freedom and usefulness, that whether she marry ill or well, she can hardly miss some benefit.’

—R. L. STEVENSON.

‘Why women don’t marry? But they do—whenever they can!’ the intelligent reader will naturally exclaim. Not ‘whenever they get the chance,’ mark you; no intelligent reader would make this mistake, though it is a common enough error among the non-comprehending. Most spinsters over thirty must have winced at one time or another at the would-be genial rallying of some elderly man relative: ‘What! you not married yet? Well, well, I wonder what all the young men are thinking of.’ I write *some man* advisedly, for no woman, however

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cattishly inclined, however desirous of planting arrows in a rival's breast, would utter this peculiarly deadly form of insult, which, strangely enough, is always intended as a high compliment by the masculine blunderer. The fact that the unfortunate spinster thus assailed may have had a dozen offers, and yet, for reasons of her own, prefer to remain single, seems entirely beyond their range of comprehension.

But the main reason why women don't marry is obviously because men don't ask them. Most women will accept when a sufficiently pleasing man offers them a sufficiently congenial life. If the offers they receive fall below a certain standard, then they prefer to remain single, wistfully hoping, no doubt, that the right man may come along before it is too late. The preservation of the imaginative faculty in women, to which I have previously alluded, doubtless accounts for many spinsters. It must also be remembered that the more educated women become, the less likely they are to marry for marrying's sake as their grandmothers did.

Then there are a few women, quite a

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small section, who, unless they can realise their ideal in its entirety, will not be content with second best. By an irony of fate, it happens that these are often the noblest of their sex. Yet another small section remain single from an honest dislike of marriage and its duties. It is perhaps not too severe to say that a woman who has absolutely no vocation for wifehood and motherhood must be a degenerate, and so lacking in the best feminine instincts as to deserve the reproach of being 'sexless.' This type is apparently increasing! I shall deal with it further in Part IV.

Then there are those—I should not like to make a guess at their number—who will marry *any* man, however undesirable and uncongenial, rather than be left 'withering on the stalk.' It is an acutely humiliating fact that there exists no man too ugly, too foolish, too brutal, too conceited and too vile to find a wife. *Any* man can find *some* woman to wed him. In this connection, one recalls the famous cook, who, when condoled with on the defection of a lover, replied: 'It don't matter; thank God I can love *any* man!'

## WHY WOMEN DON'T MARRY

One cannot help being amused by the serious articles on this subject in feminine journals. We are gravely told that women don't marry nowadays because they price their liberty too high, because those who have money prefer to be independent and enjoy life, and those who have none prefer bravely wringing a living from the world to being a man's slave, a mere drudge, entirely engrossed in housekeeping, etc., etc.; and so on—pages of it! All this may possibly be true of a very small portion of the community, but the uncontrovertible fact remains that the principal reason for woman's spinsterhood is man's indifference.

I have every sympathy with the women who wish to postpone taking up the heavy responsibilities of matrimony till they have had what in the opposite sex is termed 'a fling,' that is until they have enjoyed a period of freedom wherein to study, to travel, to enjoy their youth fully, to meet many men, to look life in the eyes and learn something of its meaning. But there comes a period in the life of almost every woman —except the aforesaid degenerate—when she feels it is time to 'put away childish things,'

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and into her heart there steals a longing for the real things of life—the things that matter, the things that last—wedded love and little children, and that priceless possession, a home of one's own.

It is the fashion nowadays to discredit the home, and it has been jestingly alluded to by Mr Bernard Shaw as 'the girl's prison and the woman's workhouse ;' but what a wonderful sanctuary it really is!—and exactly how much it means to a woman, only those who have felt the need of it can tell. In our youth, home is the place where hampers come from, where string and stamps and magazines grow on the premises, a place generally where love is, but nevertheless essentially a place we take for granted and for which we never dream of being grateful. Later on it is sometimes associated with irksome duties ; to some it even becomes a place to get away from ; but when we have lost it, how we long for it ! How reverently we think of each room and the things that happened there ; how we yearn in thought over the old garden and dream about the beloved trees. No matter how mean a home it may have been, every bit of

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it is sacred and dear—from the box-room, where on wet days we played at robbers, to the toolshed, where on fine days we played at everything under the sun. To this day if I chance on a badly-cooked potato it almost brings tears to my eyes, not because of its badness, but because it recalls the potatoes that three small children used to cook with gladness and eat with silent awe, in the ashes of a bonfire, in an old garden, long, long ago—whilst the smell of a bonfire itself makes me feel seven years old again !

But whether she has a home with her parents or not, every normal woman longs for a home of her own, and a girl who resents even arranging the flowers on her mother's dinner-table will after marriage cheerfully do quite distasteful housework in the place she calls her own.

This passionate love of home is one of the most marked feminine characteristics ; I don't mean love of being *at* home, as modern women's tastes frequently lie elsewhere, but love of the place itself and the desire to possess it. A great number of women marry solely to obtain this coveted possession. As for those who don't, the advertisement

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columns of the *Church Times*, the *Christian World*, and other papers tell a pitiful story of their need. Ladies 'by birth' (pathetic and foolish little phrase!) are willing to do almost anything in return for just a modest corner, a very subordinate place even in someone else's home. They will be house-keepers, servants, companions, secretaries, helps for 'a small salary and a home,' and sometimes for no salary at all. They will pack, sew, mend, teach, supervise ; they offer their knowledge of every kind, such as it is, their music, their languages, their health and strength, their subservience and all their virtues, real or acquired—all in return for a little food and fire, and the sheltering of four walls, which constitute their extreme need, their utmost desire—a home! Beautiful women, gifted and good women, sell themselves daily just to gain a home. Even Hedda Gabler, most degenerate of modern heroines, who shot herself rather than be a mother, sold herself in a loveless marriage only for a home. And yet constantly we read a list of trivial and fantastic reasons why women don't marry !

A girl-bachelor who was compelled to

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spend most of her time in that uncomfortable place technically known as 'one's boxes,' once told me that her greatest desire was a spot just big enough for a wardrobe in which to keep her spare clothes and little possessions. She did without a home, but she longed intensely for that wardrobe. 'I shall have to marry Tony soon,' she said, 'just for the convenience of having room for my clothes. I don't like him, and I want to wait till someone I do like comes, but if ever I take him, it will be for wardrobe room, you just see.' I must add that 'someone' *did* come, and she now possesses several wardrobes and three bouncing babies, and Tony cuts her when he meets her in the Park !

This home passion is even more noticeable in that class of society usually referred to as the lower. I have occasionally employed a poor woman who has been in service as cook since her husband died nineteen years ago. All that time, she has 'kept on the home,' *i.e.* a single room which contains her furniture. She has scarcely ever had to use the room, except for an odd day or two, and has had to spend much of her scanty leisure in cleaning it. For nineteen years she has

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paid three-and-six a week for the room sooner than sell her furniture. The £172 thus expended would have paid for the furniture over and over again. The woman quite realises the absurdity of it, but 'I simply couldn't part with the 'ome,' is her explanation.

Yet another instance. Once when staying in seaside lodgings, I had the misfortune to break a homely vessel of thick blue glass which had evidently begun life as a fancy jam jar, but had been relegated, for some reason obscure to me, to the proud position of mantel 'ornament,' if that be the term. To my surprise the worthy landlady wept bitterly over the pieces, and when I spoke of gorgeous objects wherewith to replace her treasure, explained snappishly: 'Nothing won't make it good to me! Why, that there blue vorse was the beginning of the 'ome!'

I must ask pardon for this digression and return to the subject in hand. The most depressing aspect of the question is that even if every man over twenty-five were married there would be still an enormous number of women left husbandless. This is really very

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serious, and is a condition that gives rise to many evils. To make up for it as far as possible, every man of sound health and in receipt of sufficient income ought to marry. If it is merely 'not good' for man to be alone, then it is very bad indeed for women! Every woman should have a man companion, a man to live with—if only to take the tickets, carry the bags and get up in the night to see what that noise is. Since society as at present constituted does not countenance men and women living together for companionship, then clearly every woman ought to have a husband!

Mr Bernard Shaw has written: 'Give women the vote and in five years there will be a crushing tax on bachelors.' So there should be, subject to certain qualifications of age and income; this is one of the many matters in which we should take a lesson from the Japanese where all bachelors over a certain age are taxed; in France too, a bill, to this effect, is being discussed. At the time of writing, women are full of anticipation of being speedily enfranchised, and there is a good deal of talk about what use they will make of the vote. I regret to say that

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although there have been some utterly idiotic threats to abolish that boon to wives—the man's club—yet so far, with one exception, nothing has appeared in print as to the advisability of taxing bachelors. The exception is a very interesting anonymous novel called *Star of the Morning*, which strongly advocates such a tax, among several other thoughtful suggestions for political reform.

It is obviously only just that the man who is doing nothing for the State in the way of rearing a family should be taxed to relieve the man who is. We hear so much about the falling birth-rate, and the duty of every married couple to have a family, yet everything is done to discourage those who do. The professional man slaving to earn, say, £1000 a year, and bring up three or four children for the State, is taxed exactly as much as the bachelor in receipt of the same income who does nothing at all for the State, and can even avoid the other taxes by being a lodger, if he choose.

But even if we eventually get reasonable legislation, which would offer rewards instead of additional burdens to those who

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do their share in keeping up the birth-rate ; even if a bachelor over twenty-five became as rare an object in these islands as an old maid in a Mohammedan country, still there would be this enormous superfluity of spinsters. Why is it ? Why should Great Britain be regarded as a paradise of old maids ? Why should we have more spinsters than other countries ? Is it because our colonies swallow up so many men ? Then why can't they swallow up an equal number of women ? I should like this most important matter to be taken up by the State and an Institution for Encouraging Marriage started under State auspices. One of the duties of this institution would be to induce numbers of suitable women to emigrate, so as to preserve the proper balance of the sexes in the home country, and that every colonist might have a chance to get a wife. I heard the other day of a very ordinary colonial girl who had eleven men all wanting to marry her at once. Eleven men ! And yet there are scores of charming English girls who grow old and soured without having had a single offer of marriage.

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Another duty of the Institution for Encouraging Marriage would be to try and reach and bring together the thousands of lonely middle-class men and women in large towns, who are engaged at work all day and have no means of meeting members of the opposite sex. I have just been reading Francis Gribble's very interesting novel, *The Pillar of Cloud*, in which he describes the existence of half a dozen girls in 'Stonor House,' one of those dreary barracks for homeless females engaged during the day. The frantic desire of these girls to meet men of their own class is painfully true, and this desire is not so much the outcome of young women's natural tendency to cultivate young men, but because all such men to them are possible husbands, and marriage is the only way out from Stonor House and the joyless existence there.

In *The Pathway of the Pioneer* published a few years ago, Dolf Wyllarde breaks similar ground, but her young women are more morbid and less frankly anxious to meet men with a view to matrimony. Both books, however, give one a good idea of the cheer-

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less, unnatural lives led by young middle-class women, whose relatives, if any, are far away, and who work for their living in large towns — condemned almost inevitably to celibacy by these unfavourable social conditions.

That large numbers of daintily-bred women should be condemned to such an existence is the strongest possible argument in favour of the establishment of two French institutions, viz., strictly limited families and the system of *dots*. Of late years, the former has been largely adopted in England, and until the latter custom also becomes the rule, the Institution for Encouraging Matrimony could take the matter in hand. Two or three unusually sensible philanthropists have already given their attention to this important subject, but any movement of this nature at once assumes too much the aspect of a matrimonial agency to be approved by the class for whose welfare it is destined. However, the I.F.E.M. would have to deal with this obstacle and conceal its real intentions under another name. I am sure if its object were sufficiently wrapped-up that refined men and women

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could take advantage of it without loss of self-respect—the response to such an institution by both sexes would be enormous. A club, ostensibly for promoting social intercourse, might be the solution, and subscription dances, concerts, organised excursions would not be difficult to arrange, and would make a source of brightness and interest in many drab lives. Country branches could be started if the thing proved a success.

One constantly sees in the newspapers proof of the fact that there are a very large number of middle-class young men able and anxious to marry, who lack feminine acquaintances of their own social standing from whom to make a choice. Unfortunate *mésalliances* are often the result, and it seems to me a sad and wasteful thing that these uxoriously-inclined men cannot be brought into contact with some of the thousands of young women whose lives are passed in uncongenial toil and who are eating out their hearts in their anxiety for a home and a husband of their own. Until the I.F.E.M. becomes fact, here is splendid work ready to hand for a philan-

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thropist of infinite tact, and large, sympathetic heart. What a chance to add to the sum of human joy! What a rich reward for the expenditure of but a little time and money!

## IV

### THE TRAGEDY OF THE UNDESIRED

‘So man and woman will keep their trust,  
Till the very Springs of the Sea run dust.

‘Yea, each with the other will lose and win,  
For the Strife of Love’s the abysmal Strife,  
And the Word of Love is the Word of Life.

‘And they that go with the Word unsaid,  
Though they seem of the living, are damned and dead.’

—W. E. HENLEY.

THIS is a tragedy of which few men know the existence and certainly no man in these woman-ridden isles can ever have experienced. Men always treat with derision the woman anxious for matrimony, and gibe equally at the spinster who fails to attain it. Heaven alone knows why, since by men’s laws and traditions the married state has been made to mean everything desirable for a woman, and the unmarried condition everything undesirable. ‘People think women who do not want to marry unfeminine; people think women who do want to marry

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immodest ; people combine both opinions by regarding it as unfeminine for women not to look longingly forward to wifehood as the hope and purpose of their lives, and ridiculing and contemning any individual woman of their acquaintance whom they suspect of entertaining such a longing. They must wish and not wish ; they must not give, and certainly must not withhold, encouragement—and so it goes on, each precept cancelling the last, and most of them negative.'<sup>1</sup>

Both Mr Bernard Shaw and Mr George Moore have stated in print that women frequently propose to men, and several men have confided in me details of the proposals they have received from forward fair ones. I believe it is one of the tenets of advanced women that the sex that bears the child has a right to choose the husband. Although unpleasantly revolutionary this seems eminently sane. That the right to choose a mate should be open to all adults, instead of being the sole privilege of the most selfish and least observant sex, will possibly be acknowledged in the future, when the woman question shall be set at rest for ever.

<sup>1</sup> Augusta Webster.

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In those far-off days there will, let us hope, be no more tragedy of the undesired. It seems almost indelicate to apply this phrase to the noble army of British spinsters, for the most part dignified, worthy women, comprising ratepayers, householders, philanthropists, mothers-in-all-but-fact — working parochially, among the poor, in hospitals, schools, homes, offices, and studios — on public bodies, on the staff of newspapers — generally cheerful and helpful, sometimes clever, often charming, occasionally a little narrow perhaps, but on the whole upholding the best traditions of their sex, and of course *never* admitting that they would like to have married. Deep in their own hearts, however, almost all of them must feel the sadness of their unfulfilment, comfort themselves how they may with other interests. Those that have engrossing occupations should be thankful, for the woman whose whole heart is set on finding a husband and who fails to attain this object generally becomes fretful, bitter, disappointed and useless in every way. But women whose minds are sufficiently broad to hold other ideals than the matrimonial one find other work to do, and do it

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capably and faithfully. Loving and sympathetic women are always wanted. Marriage is not essential to such a woman's life, though it may be to the highest development of her happiness.

Again, the large number of women who have had chances of marrying can comfort themselves that they chose to be single for their ideal's sake—or for whatever the reason was. Larger still is the number of those possessing the non-marrying temperament of which Bernard Shaw has written : 'Barren—the Life-Force passes it by.' This rarely troubles them ; they have a host of minor pleasures and interests which suffice ; no storms of feeling, no pangs of stifled mother-longing ruffle the placid surface of their lives. The real tragedy of the undesired does not touch either of these classes ; it is reserved in all its poignancy for those who belong to the type of the *grande amoureuse*, whom lack of opportunity generally, lack of attractiveness sometimes, has prevented from fulfilling the deepest need of their nature.

I once met at a hotel on the Riviera an elderly spinster who was always incredibly depressed. However bravely shone the sun,

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however fair seemed the world in that fairest spot, nothing had the power to cheer her. I tried once to get her to join in an excursion which a party of us were going to make on donkey-back to a neighbouring village in the hills, but she refused. Another time I invited her to accompany me to the rooms at Monte Carlo, but she again refused, and after several well-meant efforts on my part to cheer her had led to the same result, the poor soul told me in hesitating words that she shunned gay places and lively gatherings. 'They always make me discontented and remind me of what I might have had; it brings home to me the — what shall I call it? — the *tragedy of the might-have-been*.' I understood what she meant, and no further words on the subject passed between us, much to my relief, as confidences of this nature are very painful to both sides. My readers will probably despise this poor lady as morbid, selfish and unbalanced. Possibly they are right, but the sadness of an empty heart, a lonely life, was the cause of her warped nature. Fortunately hers is an extreme case; the majority of spinsters I imagine can take a delight in seeing girls

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happy, and are generally deeply interested in the love affairs of others. I recall a beautiful line of Fiona Macleod's to the effect that 'a secret vision in the soul will hallow life.' This will suffice to keep many spinsters happy — the memory of some love and tenderness, a romance of some kind to sweeten life ; women need it.

To give another instance : a woman once asked me why men fell in love. 'I wonder if you can tell me what it is about women that makes men propose to them,' she said. 'I've known numbers of plain women married and numbers of penniless ones, and some quite horrid ones without a single quality likely to make a man happy, yet there must have been *something* about them that attracted — some reason for it.'

She went on to tell me in such a pathetic way how she longed to have a home and a 'nice, kind man,' to care for her, and yet no man had ever asked her ; no man had ever desired her or looked on her with love ; she had never known the clasp of a man's passionate arms, nor the ecstasy of a lover's kiss. It seemed very strange to me,

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strangely painful and horribly humiliating. I could scarcely bear to look at her while she told me these things.

‘I would make a man so happy,’ she said, and her mournful dark eyes filled with tears ; she had rather fine eyes, and was quite a nice-looking woman with a most sweet and gentle manner. ‘I would be so good to him,’ she went on ; ‘I’d simply live for him. I try to put it out of my mind, but as I grow older, and it’s more hopeless, I think of it more and more and sometimes I feel I shall go mad with the misery of it. The future is so utterly grey and it’s all so unjust. I’m so fitted for love, and now my life’s going and I’ve had nothing, *nothing* !’

She wept bitterly and I wept too in sympathy with her. Curiously enough, this woman was not only attractive, as I have said, and anxious to please, and thoroughly feminine, but she had had ample opportunities of meeting men. I suppose she lacked what the Scotch peasant-woman called the ‘*come hither in the 'ee*’—some subtle sex-magnetism which had been possessed by those ‘plain, penniless, and horrid women’ whom she talked about. Or perhaps it was that the

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'will to live' was absent and therefore no mate came to the woman.

There are thousands of women who feel the same, though in most cases they would scorn to own it. We hear a good deal of man's right to live ; what about woman's right to love? Women are so constituted that the need for loving and being loved is the strongest factor of their being, the essential of their existence. All over the country there are lonely women of every class, leisured and working women, pretty and plain, good and bad, who are hungering and thirsting for love, for a man to take care of them, for the right to wifehood and the thrice blessed right to motherhood. In the Press the parrot cry of men echoes ceaselessly : 'Women shouldn't meddle in politics ; women shouldn't do this or that—let them mind their homes and their children.' But the restless women who do these things have generally no homes or children to mind ; what is the use of preaching the sacredness of motherhood when you will not allow them to be mothers? To what end prate of the duties of wifehood when you do not ask them to be wives?

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It is a well-known physiological fact that numbers of women become insane in middle life who would not have done so if they had enjoyed the ordinary duties, pleasures and preoccupations of matrimony — if their women's natures had not been starved by an unnatural celibacy. This is not a suitable subject to go into here, but I recommend it to the attention of my more thoughtful readers and those who concern themselves with the amelioration of the wretched social conditions of our glorious twentieth-century civilisation.

Hardest of all is the case of the woman who longs not merely for wifehood and 'a kind man,' but more especially for motherhood, the bitter-sweet crown of the sex that celibate priests preach ceaselessly as woman's first duty and highest good, but which thousands of women in this country are debarred from fulfilling! Surely no bitterness must be so poignant as the bitterness of the woman who longs for motherhood— ceaselessly in her ears the Life Force is calling, and deep in her heart the dream children are stirring, crying, 'Give us life! give us life!' becoming more importunate every

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year, as each year finds the divine possibilities unrealised.

I often think how everything combines to torment a generous-hearted, full-blooded, mother-woman whose nature is starved thus. She has, of course, to suppress all emotion on the subject, to hold her head high, and endure with a smile the 'experienced' airs of girls, much younger than herself, who happen to wear that magical golden ring that changes all life for a woman; to pretend generally that she has no wish to marry, never had, and could have if she chose, to laugh at this page if she should happen to read it, and call the writer a morbid idiot—in short, she always has to act a part before a world which professes to find exquisitely humorous the fact of a woman being cheated out of the birthright of her sex. Every paper and book she picks up nowadays contains some reference to the glories of motherhood, the joys of love. Music, pictures, novels and plays, all speak of sex fulfilled and triumphant, not starved and denied like hers. The same principle is everywhere in Nature—the sky, the sea, the flowers, the green trees, the sound of summer rain—all beautiful sights

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and sounds have the same meaning, the same burden, the same sharp sting for her. If she is inclined to be morbid, every child's face seen in the street turns the knife in the wound ; every sweet baby's cooing is another pang. 'Not for me—not for me!' must be the perpetual refrain in her mind. Her arms are empty, her heart is cold ; she belongs to the vast, sad army of the undesired.

*Do you wonder the madhouses are full of single women ?*

NOTE.—A clever and delightful friend of mine, a spinster by choice, takes exception to my views on the single estate. I should be deeply grieved if any words of mine were to cause pain to other women. I have said before that some of the best women are spinsters, which is sad to a believer in marriage like myself. Two of the sweetest and noblest women I know are unmarried ; one of them especially seems absolutely without a thought of self, and has worked hard for others all her life, giving her powers of brain and body to their utmost limit, and the treasures of her beautiful heart generously

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and without stint. I beg my readers to note that I have tried to differentiate between those spinsters who do not want to marry and those who do ; between the rich spinster who can command all the amenities of life, and the poor one compelled to a relentless and unceasing round of uncongenial toil. Still more do I wish to distinguish between the placid contented woman who can adapt herself to circumstances and find a quiet sort of happiness in any life—and the less well-balanced, more passionate natures, with deeper desires and an imperious need of loving. It is this need of loving stifled, crushed and fought against that awakens my profound compassion—a compassion which my friend informs me is wasted and misplaced. My readers must judge.



## PART II

### CAUSES OF FAILURE

‘For Marriage is like Life in this, that it is a field of battle, not a bed of roses.’—R. L. STEVENSON.

‘Marriage is to me apostasy, profanation of the sanctuary of my soul, violation of my manhood, sale of my birthright, shameful surrender, ignominious capitulation, acceptance of defeat.’—*Man and Superman*.

‘A wise man should avoid married life, as though it were a burning pit of live coals.’—*Dhammika Sutta*.



# I

## THE VARIOUS KINDS OF MARRIAGE

‘Marriage is the great mistake that wipes out the smaller stupidities of Love.’ —SCHOPENHAUER.

IN one of his essays Stevenson says: ‘I am so often filled with wonder that so many marriages are passable successes, and so few come to open failure, the more so as I fail to understand the principle on which people regulate their choice.’

Out of the chaos which envelops this ‘principle’ four special motives seem to stand out, and we can therefore roughly divide the marriages that take place into five sections thus—

1. The Marriage of Passion.
2. The Marriage of Convenience.
3. Marriage for a Purpose.
4. Haphazard Marriage.
5. The Marriage of Affection.

*The Marriage of Passion.*—One of Mr

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Somerset Maugham's characters in *The Merry-Go-Round* says: 'I'm convinced that marriage is the most terrible thing in the world, unless passion makes it absolutely inevitable.' Although a profound admirer of Mr Maugham's work, here I find myself entirely at variance with him. Most of the mad, unreasonable matches are those which 'passion makes inevitable.' Theoretically this is one of the most promising types of marriage—in practice it proves the most fatally unhappy of all. 'They're madly in love with each other, it's an ideal match' is a comment one often hears expressed with much satisfaction, but it is a painful fact that these desperate loves lead very frequently to disaster and divorce. Most of the miserable married couples personally known to me were 'madly in love' with each other at the start.

Is it to be wondered at when one considers the matter? Nature, who seldom makes a mistake where primitive mankind is concerned is by no means infallible when dealing with the artificial conditions of our Western civilisation. In the East where greater sex licence is allowed, it seems quite safe to trust

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Nature and follow the instincts she implants. Not so in our hemisphere. The young man and maid who fall under passion's thrall are temporarily blind and mad ; their judgment is obscured, their reasoning powers non-existent, nothing in the world seems of the slightest importance except the overwhelming necessity *to give themselves—to possess* the beloved, the being who has fired their blood.

If the Fates are cruel, these two are permitted to rush into matrimony. Nature has worked her will and pays no more heed. She is well-satisfied : the children born of these unions of utter madness are generally the finest and strongest, and what else does Nature care about ? But for the young couple? . . . Gradually the roseate clouds lift, the intoxicating fumes are wafted away —the rapture subsides, and each awakes from the effects of the most potent drug in the universe to find a very ordinary young person at their side—and around them a chain which men name 'Forever !'

Unhappy indeed are these two if, when they stand facing each other over passion's grave, there proves to be no link at all

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between them except the memory of the madness that has died. Fortunately this is by no means always the case, but when it is a very unhappy married life must inevitably follow. Schopenhauer gives as the reason for such matches proving unhappy the fact that their participants look after 'the welfare of the future generation at the expense of the present,' and quotes the Spanish proverb, 'He who marries for love must live in grief.' From the point of view of the individual's interest, and not that of the future generation, it certainly seems a mistake to wed the object of intense desire unless there is also spiritual harmony, community of tastes and interests, and many other points of union in common. But under the influence of suppressed passion people lose their clearness of mental vision and are therefore more or less incapable of judging.

Let there be passion in marriage by all means—so far I entirely agree with Mr Maugham—but let it be merely the outer covering of love—a garment of flame the embrace of which is ecstasy indeed, but which, when it has burnt itself away, still leaves love a solid form of joy and beauty, erect beneath

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its ashes. 'Real friendship, founded on harmony of sentiment, does not exist until the instinct of sex has been extinguished.'

*Marriages of Convenience* are of two kinds, the wholly sordid, when money, social position, or some personal aggrandisement has been the motive on one or both sides, without any basis of affection ; and the partially-sordid, when these reasons are modified by some existing affection or liking. In this category come the people who marry principally in the interests of their business or profession, such as the barrister who weds the solicitor's daughter, or the young doctor who marries into the old doctor's family. In this connection one recalls the father who advised his sons not to marry for money, but to love where money was. No doubt the possession of a little money or 'influence' is an added attraction to a maiden's charm in the eyes of the go-ahead young man of to-day ; and considering how hard it appears to be to earn a living nowadays one cannot altogether blame them —distressing as it seems from the senti-

<sup>1</sup> Schopenhauer's *Metaphysics of Love*.

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mental point of view. I don't believe, however, that there are so many wholly sordid marriages outside the confines of the set generally prefixed as 'smart.' People who are not members of this glittering circle are already sufficiently shy of matrimony nowadays, and are afraid of the enormous additional handicap such a match would carry. Of course these unions are almost inevitably miserable failures, and one wonders what else the victims could have expected.

We now come to the third division, *Marriage for a Purpose*. These matches are distantly allied with the partially-sordid, but there is nothing sordid about them, as they are frequently undertaken from the highest motives. In this class are the widowers who wed for the sake of their children, the spinsters whose motive is their desire for motherhood, the men and women who marry to possess a home, or for the sake of companionship. All these reasons are justifiable enough, and people who embark on matrimony with a set purpose generally take it very seriously, and determine to

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make a success of it. Such marriages often prove extremely happy, perhaps for the very reason that so little is asked. The spirit of contentment is an excellent influence in married life, since love is often killed by its own excessive demands, as I shall endeavour to show later.

*Haphazard Marriages* seem to me the best way to describe those unions into which men drift without any special reason, sometimes almost against their own wish. Nature does not care how the young people come together as long as they do come, and sometimes a man finds himself drifting into matrimony almost before he is aware. I write a 'man' advisedly as women never *drift* into wifehood. In these cases it is generally their set and deliberate purpose that has steered the man into the conjugal harbour unknown to him. He has merely followed the line of least resistance and found to his surprise that it leads to the altar. Mr Bernard Shaw has given a very amusing, and, in spite of itself, convincing, picture of this manœuvring in *Man and Superman*, where he also expresses his con-

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viction that 'men, to protect themselves . . . have set up a feeble, romantic conviction that the initiative in sex business must always come from the man . . . but the pretence is so shallow, so unreal that even in the theatre, that last sanctuary of unreality, it imposes only on the inexperienced. In Shakespeare's plays the woman always takes the initiative. In his problem plays and his popular plays alike the love interest is the interest of seeing the woman hunt the man down. . . . The pretence that women do not take the initiative is part of the farce. Why, the whole world is strewn with snares, traps, gins, and pitfalls for the capture of men by women. It is assumed that the woman must wait motionless to be wooed. Nay, she often does wait motionless. That is how the spider waits for the fly. The spider spins her web. And if the fly, like my hero, shows a strength that promises to extricate him, how swiftly does she abandon her pretence of passiveness, and openly fling coil after coil about him until he is secured for ever !'

*The Marriage of Affection.*—' Do you

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know any thoroughly happy couples?' says one of the characters in *Double Harness*.

'Very hard to say. Oh, ecstasies aren't for this world, you know—not permanent ecstasies. You might as well have permanent hysterics. And, as you're aware, there are no marriages in heaven. So perhaps there's no heaven in marriages either.'

These sentiments are of a nature to disgust and irritate the ignorant girl of twenty by their callous unreality in her eyes, and to delight the experienced woman of, say, thirty, by their profound truth in hers—so utterly do one's ideas about life change in the course of ten years or so!

Sixty years ago George Sand wrote: 'You ask me whether you will be happy thro' love and marriage. You will not, I am fully convinced, be so in either the one or the other. Love, fidelity, maternity are nevertheless the most important, the most necessary things in the life of a woman.'

To the same effect writes R. L. Stevenson when he says: 'I suspect Love is rather too violent a passion to make in all cases a good domestic character.' Of course no very young people will believe this, but it is a

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horrid sordid truth that, as a rule, the happiest marriages are those in which the couple do not love too intensely. I am speaking of solid, workaday happiness, not of ecstasies and raptures. The excessive claims made by passionate love and the fevered state of mind it produces are often the cause of its shipwreck. 'If I am horrid, darling,' a girl once said to her lover, when trying to make up a quarrel she herself had brought about, 'it's only because I love you so intensely.' 'Then, for God's sake, love me less, and treat me better,' snapped the outraged lover, and we can but sympathise with him.

I have purposely used the word *Affection* in this division, in place of one signifying a greater degree of feeling, and I unhesitatingly state that generally speaking, the most successful marriages are those which—'when the first sweet sting of love be past, the sweet that almost venom is,' develop into the temperate, unexacting, peaceful and harmonious unions which come under this heading. To the ardent youths and maidens—restless seekers after the elusive joy of life—who will have none of this prosaic and

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inglorious counsel, and who are prepared to stake their all on the belief that the first sweet sting of love is going to last for ever, I say: Get your roses-and-raptures over some other way; don't look for romance in marriage or, unless your case prove the exception to the rule, you will inevitably make a terrible mistake! . . . Oh, don't ask *me* how it is to be done, but remember what I say, and don't marry until the quiet, sober, beautiful and restful affection you now scorn becomes in your eyes a haven of peace from the storm and stress of life, and the highest good it contains.

Another reason why the Marriage of Affection is the most likely to prove a success is because mutual respect enters so largely into its composition, and how enormously important this is in the holy estate, none can realise until they marry. I shall have more to say later about the urgent necessity for respect in married life.

## II

### WHY WE FALL OUT: DIVERS DISCORDS

‘And yet when all has been said, the man who should hold back from marriage is in the same case with him who runs away from battle.’

—R. L. STEVENSON.

WE have discussed those types of marriage more or less doomed to failure from the outset, and now come to the reason why so many matches prove unhappy when apparently every circumstance has been favourable.

It was Socrates, I think, who said: ‘Whether you marry or whether you remain unmarried, you will repent it.’ The people who assert that marriage is a failure seem to lose sight of the fact that the estate was not ordained for the purpose of happiness, but to meet the necessities of society, and so long as these necessities are fulfilled by marriage, then the institution must be pronounced successful, however unhappy married people may be.

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If the reasons 'why we fell out, my wife and I,' were to be considered exhaustively, the subject would overflow the bounds of this modest volume and run into several hundred giant tomes ; indeed I believe an entire library could be filled with books on this matter alone. Ever since Adam and Eve had a few words over their dessert, husbands and wives have gone on quarrelling continuously and the humble philosopher who said that certain people quarrelled 'bitter and reg'lar, like man and wife,' was merely describing a condition that habit had made familiar to him.

As with the rest of life, in matrimony it is the little things that count, and the frail barque of married happiness founders principally on the insignificant, half-perceived rocks—the little jealousies, little denials, little irritations, little tempers, little biting words, which by degrees wear so many little holes in the stern that at last an irreparable leak is sprung and the ship goes down in the next storm. The big obstacles make a worse crash when they *do* get in the way, but they can be seen from afar and steered clear of.

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A miserable husband who had come to the parting of the ways (having started in the madly-in-love section), once confided in me that the bitter and terrible quarrels between him and his wife always began for some utterly trivial reason, generally because he did not admire her clothes! Could anything be more pitifully absurd? 'Then why,' I asked, 'as you're so anxious to keep the peace, do you volunteer any criticism at all?' 'Oh, I never do,' was the answer. 'She asks me my opinion of a new gown, say, and gets angry when it's unfavourable. Then of course I get angry too, I'm no saint, and presently we come to curses and words that sting like blows. Then I clear out for a couple of days, and of course there's the devil to pay when I go back, and it begins all over again. Why, this present row has lasted five weeks or so, and in the beginning it was simply because I said I didn't like the ostrich feather in her hat!'

Again: I once met at a race-meeting a school-friend, long lost sight of, whom I had last seen as a newly-wedded wife, loving and beloved. She was now very much changed, hard and haggard of face. I asked

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after the man I remembered as a radiant bridegroom.

‘Oh, he’s gone the way of all husbands,’ she said, with a sigh; ‘liver, my dear.’

‘Do you mean he’s dead?’ I asked, shocked and pained.

‘Oh, dear, no, he’s alive enough, but he’s developed liver and that’s killed our love,’ was the cynical reply.

It had. Devotion and dyspepsia are hard to reconcile, and my friend’s husband had developed a nasty knack of throwing his dinner in the fire whenever it displeased him, a habit hardly conducive to home happiness.

Food, as a fact, is one of the chief sources of friction in married life. It sounds farcical, but I am perfectly serious. Food, the ordering and cooking of it and the subsequent paying for it, is one of the great tragedies of a wife’s existence. Time, the great healer, mercifully deadens the intensity of this anguish, and matrons of fifty or so can face the daily burden of food-ordering with something like indifference. But to a woman who has not yet reached the fatal landmark aptly described as ‘the same age as everybody else, namely, thirty-five,’ it is the

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greatest cross, whilst many a bride has had her early married life totally ruined by the horrid and ever recurring necessity of finding food for her partner. Men make fun of women because their dinner, when alone, so often consists of an egg for tea, but women have such a constitutional hatred of food-ordering, inherited, no doubt, from a long line of suffering female ancestry, that the majority of them would gladly live on tea and bread-and-butter for the rest of their lives sooner than face the necessity of daily meditating on a menu. For this reason I believe vegetarian husbands are particularly desirable, since the whole principle of food-reform is simplicity. Those who go in for it acquire an entirely fresh set of ideas on the importance of food, and become quite pathetically easily pleased. I know a woman whose husband is a vegetarian and she declared that the food question, so disturbing a factor in most homes, had never caused her a single tear, or frown, or angry word, or added wrinkle. She assured me that her husband would cheerfully breakfast off a banana, lunch off a lettuce, dine on a date and sup on a salted almond. When the

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house was upset on the occasion of a large evening party and there were no conveniences for the ordinary family dinner, the creature actually ate cheese sandwiches in the bathroom, by way of a dinner, and was quite pleased to do so, moreover ! I could scarcely credit it at first, but it was really true.

Of the many paltry little causes for friction in married life incompatibility of temperature has doubtless been a very fruitful source of dissension. If one shivers when the window is opened and the other is a fresh-air faddist and can't breathe with it shut, an endless vista of possibilities of unhappiness is opened out. It was, I believe, Napoleon's second wife, Marie Louise, who always got rid of her husband when she wished to, by merely keeping her apartments cold. The great man was only comfortable in a very hot room with a blazing fire.

That grievous deficiency, no sense of humour, is another of the tiny little rocks on which married happiness often splits. This is natural enough, since an absence of this priceless quality is about the worst deprivation a traveller on life's journey can suffer from. Among men the conviction is

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wife that women invariably suffer thus, but I think we can afford to leave them this delusion, since it affords them so much satisfaction. At one time I had a journalist friend of a painfully stodgy and unusually depressing literary habit. This poor soul fancied his vein was humour, and from him I have often endured the reading aloud of the dreariest laboured pages of japes and jests, which to his thinking were sparkling with wit. My patient, long-suffering listening only brought bitter derision for my alleged lack of humorous perception, but my criticism inspired the young man to write a cynical article on 'Women and Humour,' of the kind that editors—being men—delight in, and for which he consequently got well paid.

As a fact, the things that amuse men frequently fail to amuse women and *vice versa* but it is surely illogical to deduce from this that women's humorous sense is inferior to men's—or non-existent. As, however, this apparently insignificant question is of such importance in life generally, whether it be in a palace, a convent, a villa or a workhouse—I think a wife would be well-advised to

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assume amusement if she feels it not, laugh with her lord even when she doesn't see the point, and cultivate indifference when he fails to laugh with her.

Writers on marriage seem to have paid very little attention to this important point. Stevenson is one of the exceptions : 'That people should laugh over the same sort of jest,' he says, 'and have many an old joke between them which time cannot wither or custom stale is a better preparation for life, by your leave, than many other things higher and better-sounding in the world's ears. You could read Kant by yourself, if you wanted ; but you must share a joke with someone else.'

In a beautiful poem, Stephen Phillips describes how a bereaved lover can think calmly of his dead, when he looked at her possessions, the things she had worn, even when he read her letters ; and her saddest words had no power to pain him, but when he came to—

'A hurried, happy line !  
A little jest too slight for one so dead :  
This did I not endure—  
Then with a shuddering heart no more I read,'

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In truth, the little joke shared, the old allusion at which both are accustomed to laugh, is a more potent bond than many a deeper feeling. One can recall these trifles long after one has forgotten the poignant moments of passion, the breathless heart-beats, the wild embraces which at the time seemed to promise such deathless memories. All, all are forgotten, but the silly little joke has still the power to bring tears to our eyes if the one with whom we shared it is lost to us.

A great many people are wretched who would have been perfectly happy with another partner. 'In the inequalities of temperament lies the main cause of unhappiness in marriage. Want of harmony in tastes counts for much, but a misfit in temperament for more.' So ludicrously mismated are some couples that one wonders how they could ever have dreamed of finding happiness together. This again is frequently the fault of our absurd conventions, which make it so difficult for single young men and women to really get to know each other. However, things have improved so much in this direction during the

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last decade or two that we ought not to grumble, but, even now, if a man show a decided preference for a girl's company his name is at once coupled with hers in a manner which can but alarm a youth devoid of matrimonial intentions. That relic of the dark ages, the intention-asking parent, is by no means extinct, and many a promising friendship that might have ended in a happy marriage is spoilt by the clumsy intervention of this barbaric relative.

A young barrister friend of mine—we will call him Anthony—once tried, for reasons of professional policy, to make himself agreeable to a solicitor with a very large family of daughters. Being a shrewd man, he selected one of the girls still in the schoolroom to pay particular attention to, and thus escaped the necessity of showing special interest in her elder and marriageable sisters. His intimacy with the family prospered, and the father became a very useful patron. However, as time went on, he discovered to his dismay that his little friend, Amaryllis, had grown up and that he was regarded in the family as her special property. Speedily he transferred his attachment to Aphrodite, the youngest

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girl then in the schoolroom, and by this means saved himself from an entanglement with Amaryllis, whilst at the same time preserving the valuable friendship of her father. In an incredibly short time, however, Aphrodite was nubile, and the family once more expectant of securing Anthony as a permanent member. Once again he executed the same manœuvre, choosing this time the little Andromeda, a plain child still in the nursery. The family, though disappointed, remained hopeful, and the years passed peacefully on, bringing a few sons-in-law in their train, and innumerable boxes of sweets to the unprepossessing Andromeda. When, however, Andromeda too grew up, the wily Anthony feared his fruitful friendship must inevitably come to an end, since the only remaining daughter had already reached the dangerous age of fifteen, and bore moreover the improper name of Anactoria!

A long friendship and a short engagement is perhaps the best combination. A prolonged engagement is the most trying relationship between the sexes possible to conceive. For the woman it means the drawbacks of matrimony without its charm of

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restful finality, or any of its solid worldly advantages. On the man's side it means the irksomeness of the marriage yoke without any of its satisfactions and comforts. On the man, indeed, a long engagement is especially hard, as at least the woman is spared the burden of ordering his food and coping with his servants. Many a sincere affection has been killed by the restraints and irritations of a long engagement. Many a genuine passion has waned during its dreary course, until but a feeble spark of the great flame is left to light the wedded life, and both man and woman carry the mark of that suppressed ardour which, under happier circumstances, might have come to a joyous fruition. Their children, too, sometimes lack vitality, and show the need of the fire that died before they were begotten.

I don't know who it was who first coined the phrase 'the appalling intimacy of married life'; certainly it is an apt expression, and one wonders at what period in the world's history men and women began to find that intimacy 'appalling.' It sounds a modern enough complaint, and somehow one feels sure it was

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never indulged in by our grandmothers, who looked upon their husbands as a kind of visible embodiment of the Lord's Will, and respected them accordingly. They would never have dreamed of finding irksome what Mrs Lynn Linton called the '*chair-à-chair* closeness of the English home.'

Much has been written of the degradation of love by habit, and Alexandre Dumas expresses the whole question to perfection in one crystal sentence: 'In marriage when love exists habit kills it; when love does not exist habit calls it into being.' This is profoundly true, and for every passion habit has killed it must certainly have created more genuine affections.

The Spartan plan of allowing husband and wife to meet only by stealth shows an acute understanding of human nature and has much to recommend it, if the object in view is to prolong the period of passion. But we are not now dealing with passion, but with the ordinary affection between people who have to live together under the trying conditions of modern marriage, and in these circumstances one must agree with Dumas as to the wonders worked by habit.

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Indeed, if people only realised it, habit is the cement which holds the edifice of matrimony together. With the passing of years, given the slightest basis of mutual harmony, one's partner becomes indispensable—not by reason of her charms or the love we bear him, but simply because she or he is a part of our lives. That is why I think the policy of constant separation foolish. It is based presumably on the erroneous supposition that absence makes the heart grow fonder. Where the basis of mutual harmony does *not* exist, it may be true; and if a couple dislike each other and get on badly, a short separation may serve to relieve the tension, and to send them back each resolved to try and make things smoother in future. But where affection exists, it is a mistake. One learns to do without the other; that linking chain of little daily intimacies, oft-repeated jests, endearing customs, is temporarily snapped, and it is not easily put together again. My friend Miranda said to me not long ago: 'If Lysander's been away from me a day I've heaps to talk about when he returns—if we've been parted a month, I've nothing on earth to say.'

I think it is de la Rochfoucauld who says:

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‘Absence deepens great passions and lessens little ones just as the wind puts out the candle and heightens the fire.’ This is fine from the literary point of view, but is it true? My experience says No. Yet *during* the absence this aphorism seems true enough. Disillusion comes with reunion. Who does not remember that first departure of the Beloved—the innumerable letters, the endless meditation, the ceaseless yearning and the everlasting planning for the glorious return? What a meeting that is going to be! How one dwells in thought on that first goodly satisfaction of the desire of the eyes; goodlier still that joyous clasping of the hands; goodliest of all that glorious locking of the lips, that unending embrace in the ecstasy of which all the wretched hours of absence are to be forgotten—and, oh! laughter of the gods! how different it really proves! What a hideous disappointment the meeting is! How different the Beloved looks from our passionate dream; his hair wants cutting; we don’t like his boots; his tie is not of our choosing; his speech does not please us; his kiss has no thrill; his remarks bore; his presence irritates: in short, *we have learnt to*

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*do without him*, so nothing he does seems right. Poor Beloved! and did you think the same of us? Are you disappointed too? Did you say to yourself: 'How fagged she looks! By Jove! she's getting a double chin. I thought pink used to suit her. What's she done to her hair? Her voice seems sharper. Why does she laugh like that? I don't like her teeth. Good heavens, the woman's hideous!' In short, *he has learnt to do without us*. When husbands and wives learn this lesson, the good ship 'Wedded Bliss' is getting into perilous waters where danger of utter wreck looms large.

But it is equally fatal to go to the other extreme, and I entirely agree with that authoress (who was she?) who said that no house could be expected to go on properly unless the male members of the family are out of it for at least six hours daily, Sundays excepted. The woman whose husband's occupation, or lack of it, keeps him at home all day has my profound sympathy. Merely to have to think out and order a man's lunch as well as his breakfast and dinner must be a bitter trial. For this reason among others women should never marry a man who does

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not work at *something*. If he has no bread-winning business to remove him from his wife's sphere of action for several hours daily, then he must have a hobby, or a game mania, or engrossing duties which serve the same purpose. Otherwise the wife must be constituted on a plane of inhuman goodness and possess infinite love, tact, and patience if the two are to live happily together.

The same principle applies to women, though it is not generally recognised. I am convinced that a great number of middle-class marriages prove unhappy merely because the woman has not enough to do. Possessed of sufficient servants, her household duties occupy a very small portion of her leisure, and if her children are at school (or perhaps she has none) she has nothing more engrossing to do than read novels and pay visits. The result is that one type of woman cultivates nerves and becomes a neurasthenic semi-invalid; another cultivates the opposite sex and fills her leisure hours with undesirable philandering; another develops temper or melancholy or jealous fancies; and so on—all of them spoilt as companions merely for want of sufficient occupation.

### III

#### THE AGE TO MARRY

‘To me the extraordinary thing is not that so many people remain unmarried, but that so many rush into marriage, as they might rush into a station to catch a train. And if you catch the wrong train, what then? All you have to comfort you is the fact that you have travelled.’

—ROBERT HICHENS.

A GREAT many unhappy unions might be prevented if people could find their right age for marrying. As it differs with the individual, it is impossible to lay down any exact rule. Some men are capable of making a good choice at twenty-two; others don’t know their own minds at double that age. Some girls are fit for wifehood and maternity in their teens; others never.

In the interests of abstract morality early marriages are desirable, and in England everything the law can do is done to encourage them. In France the preservation of family authority is considered all-important, and the law apparently tries to check early unions by

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every means in its power, regardless of the high percentage of illegitimate births which is the direct consequence.<sup>1</sup>

Broadly speaking, no woman should wed until she understands something of life, has met a good many men, has acquired a certain knowledge of physiology and eugenics and a clear understanding of what marriage really means. No woman should marry until she has learnt the value of money, and how to manage a household—until she has had plenty of girlish fun and gaiety, and is thus ready for the more serious things of life. Not until then is she likely to be happy in the monotony of wedlock or capable of attuning her mind to the necessity of being faithful to one man only, in thought as well as in deed. Broadly speaking, also, no man is likely to marry happily until he has seen life and plenty of it, has hammered out for himself something of a philosophy and obtained considerable knowledge of women and a consequent understanding of how to make one happy.

<sup>1</sup> In 1903 one tenth of all the children born in France were illegitimate. In Paris alone the percentage was higher still—about one in every four.

## THE AGE TO MARRY

This is not so easily done as men suppose, and it takes time to learn. Few men under thirty are fit to have the care of a wife, and Heaven preserve a girl from a young husband who is still a cub! No doubt she will have glorious moments, for there is something intoxicating about the ardour of a very young heart, and that is why we find boy and girl marriages so charming—in theory. Sometimes in the case of an exceptional couple, well suited to each other, they really are charming, and then it is the most beautiful marriage conceivable—two young things, starting off hand in hand on life's journey, brave-hearted, loving, full of high hopes. But as a rule the glory is limited to moments only; young girls are mostly shallow and frivolous; very young men are often madly selfish and reckless. They are so proud of being the sole possessor of an attractive woman that their conceit, always immense, swells into monstrous proportions and they grow wholly unbearable. If dark days should come to the young couple, the boy-husband has no philosophy to support him, no knowledge of women to enable him to understand his wife and live happily with her,

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and little self-control for his help; she has the same defects of youth, and the result is failure. Stevenson puts it perfectly thus: 'You may safely go to school with hope, but before you marry you should have learned the mingled lesson of the world.' On the other hand, Grant Allen says that 'the best of men are, so to speak, born married,' and that it is only the selfish, mean, and calculating man who waits till he can afford to marry. 'That vile phrase scarcely veils hidden depths of depravity,' he continues. 'The right sort of man doesn't argue with himself at all on these matters. He doesn't say, with selfish coldness: "I can't afford a wife"; or "If I marry now I shall ruin my prospects." He feels and acts. He mates like the birds, because he can't help himself.'

I must say that these young men who do not think, but merely feel and act, scarcely seem of the highest type in my opinion, and if mating like the birds were to be generally accepted as a sign of a noble nature—well, nobility would be decidedly less rare than at present!

## IV

### WILD OATS FOR WIVES

‘Nothing that is worth saying is proper.’

—G. BERNARD SHAW.

‘I don’t believe in the existence of Puritan women. I don’t think there is a woman in the world who would not be a little flattered if one made love to her. It is that which makes woman so irresistibly adorable.’

—OSCAR WILDE.

IF there be any readers whose susceptibilities are shocked by this headline, they are respectfully requested — nay, commanded — to read no further. If there be any whose susceptibilities waver without as yet experiencing any actual shock, they are affectionately asked — nay, implored — to re-read several times the above quotation from Mr Shaw’s immortal *Candida*, to thereupon pull themselves together and take the plunge. I can promise them it won’t be anything like as terrible as they half hope — in fact its essential propriety will probably disappoint them bitterly!

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Curiously enough, though women are more anxious to marry than men, and do everything in their power to achieve what men often strive to resist—after marriage it is generally the woman who is most discontented. Of late years a spirit of strange unrest has come over married women, and they frequently rebel against conditions which our grandmothers would never have dreamed of murmuring at. There are a variety of causes for this: one that marriage falls short of women's expectations, as I said in the opening chapter, another that they have had no *feminine* wild oats. Please note the qualifying adjective, duly italicised, and do not attempt to misunderstand me. I am no advocate of the licence generally accorded to men being extended to women.

‘Wild oats’ of this nature, otherwise an ante-hymeneal ‘fling,’ was certainly not a necessity of our grandmothers, but a certain (fairly numerous) type of modern women seem to make better wives when they have reaped this harvest. Take for example the cases of Yvonne and Yvette which are personally known to me. Yvette was engaged at eighteen and married at twenty-one. At the

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age of twenty-six she was the mother of four children. She had scarcely time to realise what youth meant and begin to enjoy it before her girlhood was stifled under the responsibilities of marriage and maternity. She had accepted her first offer, and he was practically the only man she knew anything of. Beyond him she had seen nothing of men, or of the world ; certainly she had never flirted or had men friends or enjoyed any admiration but that of her *fiance*.

At twenty-six Yvette began to realise that she had been cheated out of a very precious part of life and an invaluable experience. Though a fairly happy wife and a devoted mother, she felt that she might have had those lost delights as well as the domestic joys, and the knowledge enraged her.

A dangerous spirit of curiosity entered her heart, and a still more dangerous longing for adventure and excitement. She realised that there were other men in the world who admired her besides her Marcus, and that she was pretty and still quite a young woman. At thirty Yvette was a mistress of the art of intrigue—had engineered several dangerous *affaires*, and might have come to serious grief

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had not Marcus been a singularly wise, tender, and understanding husband.

‘It isn’t that I don’t love him dearly,’ she confided in me when resolving to turn over a new leaf. ‘I wouldn’t exchange him for anyone in the world, and you know what the children are to me—but somehow I want something else as well—some excitement. I feel I’ve had no *fun* in my life, and I wanted to have a fling before it was too late. When I was engaged I scarcely ever even danced with anyone but Marcus, and for the first four years of my married life I had a baby every eighteen months—it was nothing but babies, nursing the old one and getting ready for the new one! Not that I didn’t love it, but the reaction was bound to come, and it did. If only I could have had the excitement and the gaiety and the glamour first, and then married when I was about twenty-five, I should have been perfectly satisfied then, like Yvonne!’

Yvonne certainly managed her affairs better. Fate saved her from the misfortune of falling in love too soon. She always had a train of admirers, and was enabled to enjoy the power of her womanhood to the full; she travelled, made delightful friendships with both sexes,

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learnt to know the world and acquired a philosophy of life. When she married, at twenty-nine, she had seen enough of other men to know exactly the kind of husband she wanted, and had had enough excitement to make her appreciate the peace and calm of matrimony.

The secrets of many wives lie heavily on my soul as I write, and more than one woman, with some real reason for remorse, has confided in me that it was only that fatal desire for excitement that primarily caused her undoing. I shall instruct my son to be sure to marry a woman who has got her wild oats safely over, or select a wife of the more old-fashioned type who does not require them. With the modern temperament they must almost inevitably come sooner or later, and to what extent the modern temperament will have evolved by the time the *Boy of Boys* is marriageable, the ironical gods alone know !

Bachelors take note ! A woman — new style—who has knocked about over half the world and sown a mild crop of the delectable cereal will prove a far better wife, a more cheery friend and faithful comrade than the girl *of more or less the same type* whose

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first experience you are, and who will make enormous claims on your love and patience by reason of her utter ignorance of men. You will possibly even have to live up to an ideal founded on novel-reading, and that you will find very wearing, my friend! The experienced woman knows men so thoroughly, she will expect nothing more of you than you can give her, and will appreciate your virtues to the utmost and make the best of your vices. ‘But she has flirted so outrageously,’ you say? Well, so much the better, she is less likely to do it after marriage. ‘But, hang it all, she has been kissed by other men,’ you say? Well then, she has no need for further experiences of this kind and is not likely ever to give her lips again to others once she is yours. . . . How can you be sure? That is one of the innumerable risks of marriage. How can *she* be sure that *your* last crop is sown, still less reaped? . . . Oh, my dear man, you really make me very angry —do for heaven’s sake try and get away from conventional ideas of right and wrong! Judge things *for yourself*, and as they would seem, say, at the edge of an active volcano! . . . All the things we fuss so much about

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would doubtless quickly assume their real value if viewed from this perilous situation.

And even in the sad cases where a woman has sown real wild oats in the man's sense of the word, how different the little moral rules and regulations which we keep for these occasions would appear in the face of an immediate and violent death. I heard not long ago of a very sad story which bears this out. A man very narrowly escaped death from drowning, shortly after he had broken his engagement with a girl he genuinely loved, on her confessing to him that, many years before, she had once yielded to the importunities of a passionate lover. I do not know what were his emotions in the awful moment when the waters closed over him, and he was experiencing that horrible fight for breath which those who have known it describe as the most terrible sensation conceivable. Apparently his hairbreadth escape from death tore from his eyes the swathings of conventional opinion with which he had been blinded. Instead of regarding himself as a deeply wronged man he realised that he had behaved horribly to the unfortunate girl, who had thus been doubly outraged by his sex.

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He sought her at once and begged to be taken back again, but she happened to be a woman of some spirit, and she refused to trust herself to a man of such narrow views, and given to such harsh judgment.

Of course this treatment increased his love a thousandfold. It obsessed him to a painful degree, and in the end his desperate entreaties prevailed on her deep affection for him and she relented. Their marriage was not very happy, as may be imagined; they both loved to madness and the ghost of that dead passion stood ever between them, an invisible, poisonous presence that killed their joy in each other. After a time a deep melancholy settled on the woman, and she allowed some trifling illness to take such a hold on her that it caused her death.

When she was dying, I am told, she said to her faithful friend: 'If ever you meet another woman who has made one little slip—a thing which at the time seemed so natural and inevitable as not to be sin at all—tell her never *never* to confess it to the man she is going to marry, least of all if she loves him. If that confession doesn't part them altogether, it will always be between

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them. One does it wishing to be straight, but it's the most dreadful mistake a woman can make.'

Her wish to be straight had cost this poor woman not only her whole life's happiness, and her very life itself, but the happiness of the man she loved, in whose interests she had made the confession that wrought the harm. 'How dearly I have paid! how dearly I have paid!' she used to say over and over again in her last illness.

This is an absolutely true story, and it seems to me a burning injustice that a woman should suffer so bitterly for what would be absolutely disregarded in a man. I have no doubt there are many similar cases, and emphatically I say that such confessions are ill-advised. The ordinary conventional-thinking man placed in these circumstances would either throw a woman over, or marry her against his convictions. The extraordinary masculine code, for some reason beyond my feminine powers of comprehension, will not admit that a spinster who has had a lover, or even made one 'false step,' is a fit person to wed, though no man would object to marrying a widow, and

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many men take respondent *divorcees* to wife.

Even in the case of a rarely generous-minded, tolerant and understanding man, who judged the offence at its true computation, such knowledge would only prove disturbing and a source of insecurity to conjugal happiness. No good purpose of any kind can be served, and the ease which confession is proverbially supposed to gain for the sinner would be bought at a very heavy price.

‘But two wrongs don’t make a right, and surely it can’t be proper for a woman to deceive a man on such a vital point,’ the stern moralist may exclaim. Possibly not, according to the strictly ideal standard of ethics; but, viewed from the larger standpoints of life and of commonsense, this ‘deceit’ would appear to be advisable. And be assured, my unpleasant moralist (I’m sure you are an unpleasant person), that the sinner will not get off ‘scot free,’ as you seem to fear. Many and many a stab will be her portion, for memory is a potent poison, and every expression of love and trust from her husband will most likely carry its own special sting, whilst the round, innocent eyes of

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adoring little children, to whom she is a being that can do no wrong, will be a meet punishment for an infinitely greater fault. Meanwhile the man is *in all probability* in every way a gainer by the woman's silence, for doubtless he is doubly dear to her for the very fact that the first man treated her badly, and she may perhaps be a better wife, a stronger and sweeter woman, a more capable mother, by reason of the suffering she has undergone.

Now let no maliciously obtuse person attribute to me the pernicious doctrine that a woman with a past is the best wife for a man. I merely say that a good woman who has surrendered herself to an ardent lover and been afterwards deserted by him must necessarily have gone through such intense suffering that her character is probably deepened thereby and her capacity for love and faithfulness increased. It is another truism that suffering is necessary to bring out the best qualities in women.

Men too should keep the details of their wild oats severely to themselves. In married life there are bound to be secrets and the happiest couples are those who know how to

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keep them, each to him or her self. A very good motto for the newly betrothed would be that of Tom Broadbent in *John Bull's Other Island*—‘Let us have no tellings—perfect confidence, but no tellings: that's the way to avoid rows!’

## V

### A PLEA FOR THE WISER TRAINING OF GIRLS

IF girls were more reasonably trained with regard to matters of sex, there would be far fewer miserable wives in the world, and fewer husbands would be driven to seek happiness outside their home circle. If, when girls reach years of discretion, they were systematically taught some rudimentary outline of the fundamental principles of existence, instead of being left in utter ignorance as at present, the extraordinarily false notions of sex which they now pick up would cease to obtain, and a great deal of harm would thus be avoided. As it is, maidens are now given tacitly to understand that the subject of sex is a repulsive one, wholly unfit for their consideration, and the functions of sex are loathsome, though necessary. I write tacitly with intention, for little if anything is ever said to a girl on this subject; indeed, it is extraordinary how the ideas are conveyed to her without words, but inculcated somehow they

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certainly are, and it is difficult to understand how mothers manage to reconcile this teaching with their evident wish that their girls should marry. The ideal held up to girls nowadays is apparently the sexless sort of Diana one—not merely chastity, but sterility.

Most girls are aware from a very early age of the social advantages and importance of marriage, and grow up with a keen desire to accomplish it in due course, although secretly dreading it, because of their absurd perverted ideas of its physical side. Why cannot girls—and boys too, for that matter—be taught the plain truth (in suitable language of course) that sex is the pivot on which the world turns, that the instincts and emotions of sex are common to humanity, and in themselves not base or degrading, nor is there any cause for shame in possessing them, although it is necessary that they should be strenuously controlled. Why cannot girls be taught that *all love*, even the romantic love which occupies so large a portion of their dreams, *springs from the instinct of sex?*<sup>1</sup> This may be thought a dangerous lesson, but the present policy of silence on this subject

<sup>1</sup> Schopenhauer's *Metaphysics of Love*.

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is far more dangerous, inducing as it does a tendency to brood over the forbidden theme.

I remember when in my early teens a schoolfellow of about fifteen confided in me that 'a man'—he was a harmless boy of about twenty—had kissed her hand when passing her a tennis racquet. She drew her hand indignantly away, and said: 'How dare you insult me!' then left the tennis court and refused to play any more. I do not think many girls are so silly as this, but the incident illustrates the general tone inculcated at that school. And it shows what an emphasis on sex matters the girl's mind had received, when she saw an insult in a perfectly innocent and courteous act of admiring homage. What a harmful preparation for life such training must be! This is the kind of teaching that results in those wretched honeymoons which one occasionally hears of in secret, and which produces unwilling wives whose disdainful coldness is their husbands' despair. This lack of feeling and lack of comprehension of the needs of stronger, warmer natures is one of the deepest and most incurable causes of married misery.

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Let us teach our girls to regard sex as a *natural* and *ordinary* fact, and the infinite evils which spring from regarding it as extraordinary and repulsive will thus be avoided. Let us bring them up to think that loving wifehood, passionate motherhood are the proper expression of a woman's nature and the best possible life for her.

In a very interesting book called *Woman in Transition*, recently published, this view of woman's destiny is repeatedly scoffed at. The writer, Annette B. Meakin, is a fellow of the Anthropological Institute, and evidently widely read and travelled. I will give a few quotations: 'In the happy future when higher womanly ideals have spread around us we shall all realise, no matter to which sex we belong, that to hold unqualified motherhood before every girl's eyes as her highest ideal is to play the traitor to our race and to humanity.' . . . 'English Head Mistresses—though often unmarried themselves—still consider it their pious duty to tell their pupils that motherhood is woman's highest destiny, and the pupils . . . make marriage their first aim, and other success in life has consequently to take a second place.' . . . 'Some

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very good women in England are still telling our young girls that motherhood is, for every woman, the worthiest goal, without suspecting that the doctrine they preach is dangerously conducive to that legal prostitution euphemistically known as loveless marriage, if not to greater evils.' . . . 'How can any girl who has been taught that maternity is woman's only destiny dare to run the risk of losing it?'

In answer to these objections: of course no sane person would hold *unqualified* motherhood up to girls as their noblest ideal. Nor does any thoughtful individual believe that maternity is woman's *only* destiny. But as to *highest* (*i.e.* most noble) destiny—if worthy motherhood (and by the word worthy I wish to imply all the fine qualities of body and mind that go to produce healthy, intelligent, and well-trained children) does not fulfil it, I should like to know what does? In answer to this question that naturally springs to the mind of every reader, Miss Meakin contents herself with the statement: 'In Finland and Australia, as in America and Norway, the young girl is taught that woman's highest destiny is within the reach of every woman;

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that her highest destiny and her highest ideals depend, not on some man who may or may not come her way, but on herself; and that the highest ideal of womanhood is to be a true woman.' This is well enough, but it is far too vague to be held up as woman's standard. We want a more definite ideal than this to aim at. What, for instance, *is* a 'true woman' specifically? I should have thought the most essential part of such a one's outfit was her potentialities for wifehood and motherhood.

Miss Meakin blames teachers for inculcating the importance of motherhood into their pupils' minds with the result that 'other success in life has to take a second place.' What then does this writer consider ought to take the first place? Does she seriously think the success of women in business or politics, as municipal councillors, as writers, artists, thinkers, is of more importance than the success of women as mothers? *Is it possible?* . . . I recall a poem of W. E. Henley's on the woman question, one line of which runs 'God in the garden laughed outright.' Surely there must often be uproarious laughter in heaven nowadays when

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the woman question is being discussed on earth!

So much for abstract ideals, but when we come to facts I must admit the lady's argument is sound. 'In a country where there are a million and a half more women than men,' she pertinently states, 'it is worse than foolish to teach young girls that motherhood is their highest destiny. Such teaching, if persisted in, will lead to greater evils than we care to contemplate even at a distance.' But what greater evil could there possibly be than the existence of 30,000 prostitutes in London alone, as is the case to-day? If every one of these unfortunate women had been made to believe firmly, as an article of faith, that worthy motherhood was her highest destiny, there might be a good many less noughts to this number.

Miss Meakin continues: 'Besides the sacred duties of motherhood, there are the equally sacred duties of fatherhood, yet man does not allow these latter to interfere with his mental growth.' Nor is there any need that woman should do so; the idea that a woman, to be a good wife and mother, must

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necessarily stunt her mental growth and forego all culture has long since been discarded.

To my mind the whole trouble arises from the practice of teaching one set of catchwords to girls and another to boys, as Stevenson says. Since women cannot be mothers by themselves, it is useless to teach girls that motherhood is their highest destiny when we do not also teach boys that fatherhood is theirs, but—quite the contrary—give them to understand that marriage is something to be avoided, in early manhood at least.

If we were to instruct all young people of *both* sexes that worthy marriage and parenthood are the highest destiny for average mortals, and they acted on this precept, many of the problems of the day would be solved, the numbers of superfluous women would be greatly reduced, the social evil would perceptibly diminish, the physique of the race would improve, and the birth-rate would quickly rise. In short, there would be less ironical laughter in heaven, and a great deal more honest happiness and health on earth! I shall have more to say of parenthood as an ideal in Part IV.

## VI

### ‘KEEPING ONLY TO HER’: THE CRUX OF MATRIMONY

‘We make gods of men and they leave us ; others make brutes of them and they fawn and are faithful !’

—OSCAR WILDE.

‘It is part of the curse of nature that a man ceases after a time to worship the body of a woman, and when after that there is nothing his mind and soul can revere—who shall remain true, as it is called ?’

—MARY L. PENDERED.

‘AND keep thee only to her as long as ye both shall live.’ How many men have solemnly undertaken this exacting vow sincerely meaning to abide by it ? I have no data for answering this question, but I have sufficient belief in the essential good in human nature to believe that most people start their married life meaning to be faithful. This belief was not even shattered by the shock of hearing a very modern bride remark the other day : ‘Max says he can’t promise to be faithful but he’ll do his best.’ The amazing

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complacency of the young woman was a thing to marvel at, though hardly to admire.

Schopenhauer asserts that 'Conjugal fidelity is artificial with men, but natural to women.' Judging by the Divorce Court returns, it would seem that this natural feminine trait has weakened somewhat, since this view was expressed some sixty years ago. According to the Society chroniclers—self-appointed—it certainly has in 'London's West End, littered with broken vows.'

It is dangerous to generalise on such a topic, but since people resist temptation far less often than moralists suppose, it is perhaps safe to state that when men are faithful, it is principally from lack of opportunity, or disinclination to be otherwise. This may disgust those of my feminine readers who refuse to acknowledge, with Professor Lester Ward, that man is essentially a polygamous animal, but the more experienced in the sorrowful facts of life will own the truth of this statement.

On the other hand, when women break their marriage vow, it is seldom for any merely frivolous or sordid reason (of course excepting the essentially wanton type, whom

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no man should be fool enough to marry), but nearly always either because they are under the spell of infatuation for the other man, or because they are utterly miserable in their marriage and seek to drug themselves to forgetfulness or indifference by means of the poison of some intrigue. Perhaps the Judge who is more merciful than men will count both these reasons as excuses and will pardon the sinners who have greatly loved or greatly sorrowed.

A doctor who is interested in the study of social questions once showed me some interesting statistics on this subject. From seventy-six men selected at random from his list of acquaintances, fourteen were childless, and all but two of these were much happier than most men, and gave their wives no cause for jealousy. This high percentage of happy though childless marriages is rather curious—I cannot account for it. Of the remaining sixty-two, all had families: five were fond of their wives, but not faithful; two lived apart with other women; three others were unhappily married, quarrelling bitterly and constantly. Of two others, my friend was doubtful. One other disliked his

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wife, but was too busy to bother about other women. The remaining forty-nine were comparatively happy and devoted: 'Most of them are kept free from any great temptation by busy lives and regular hours,' the doctor added, 'and those who are especially appreciative or susceptible in regard to the fair sex have had enough love-making, and want no more outside their homes.' I suspect this latter cause is applicable to a great many so-called 'model' husbands!

This list, however, can scarcely be considered representative, as it contained only two actors, three soldiers, one sailor, and no stockbrokers—four classes in which inconstant husbands are particularly numerous. The conditions of an actor's life obviously tend towards infidelity; the unhealthy excitement and alternating depression of a stockbroker's existence may have the same effect. Members of the services are popularly supposed to be less faithful than the rest of husbands, but possibly if the business and professional men had the same amount of opportunities and temptation, a similar excess of leisure and equally long intervals of separation from their wives, they would

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prove as inconstant as the country's defenders are supposed to be. My doctor's list also contains no members of the 'Smart Set,' a class containing practically no faithful husbands, according to Father Vaughan!

Although it is the little things that spoil conjugal happiness, it is the big things which separate husband and wife, and of these undoubtedly infidelity is the most frequent cause. It might truly be called the crux of marriage. Personally I think only three faults are bad enough to make it socially worth while for a woman to leave her husband: drunkenness with violence; misconduct with members of the household, temporary or permanent; and introducing a mistress under a wife's roof. In the case of a woman with children, even these are not enough if she cannot take the children with her. For the last-named act alone a wife could obtain a divorce under the code of Justinian.

Lapses from the marriage vow on the part of one's spouse are best treated, like all other troubles, in a philosophical spirit. It is, however, 'easy to talk!'-one often hears that sexual jealousy is the most frightful

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of mental tortures. Men are more keenly affected by it than women, and the man whose wife has been unfaithful seems to suffer more acutely, even when he does not care for her, than the woman in the reverse circumstances. That is because his passions are stronger, a man will tell you, or because he looks up to the mother of his children as a being above the sins of the flesh. Probably the real reason is that man has generally had his own way since the *ménage* in Eden, and he resents having his belongings taken from him. Woman, however, can bear this deprivation better, being more accustomed to share her lord from the time when her sex began to multiply in excess of his—or is it that women have no instinctive antagonism to polygamy?

The world has become well accustomed to man's polygamous instinct by now, and even its laws are framed accordingly. In novels, the discovery of a husband's infidelity always causes a perfect cataclysm; the reader is treated to page after page of frenzied scenes; the wife almost loses her reason; her friends and relatives sit in gloomy council deciding 'what is to be done'; the

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news is shouted from the housetops; and everybody cuts the man dead.

But in real life, women keep these tragedies to themselves, sometimes bearing them with a strange calmness and philosophy. Fortunately a man is seldom so lacking in worldly wisdom as to let his wife discover his misconduct, and, as a rule, a woman would rather die than reveal such a wound to the world. The burden of a husband's infidelity is borne for years in silence with smiling face and head held high, by many a wife too proud to own herself incapable of keeping a man faithful. Only when years have accustomed her to the humiliation, and dulled the sharp edge of her grief, does she permit herself the relief of confidences.

Few women can understand why a husband, though fond of and devoted to his wife, should nevertheless seek elsewhere that which she has ceased to possess for him. She whose knowledge of the springs of life is deep enough to enable her to understand this, knows also that hers is the better part, that she represents to her husband the centre and mainspring of his existence, which

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remains steadfast long after his temporary amorous madnesses have burned away to ashes.

Nevertheless, after 'Alone'—'Unfaithful' is perhaps the saddest and most awful word in human speech. One can imagine it written innumerable times, in flaming letters, across the confines of Hell. . . . *Unfaithful!*

## PART III

### SUGGESTED ALTERNATIVES

‘For me the only remedy to the mortal injustices, to the endless miseries, to the often incurable passions which disturb the union of the sexes, is the liberty of breaking up conjugal ties and forming them again.’

—GEORGES SAND.

‘Until the marriage tie is made more flexible, marriage will always be a risk, which men particularly will undertake with misgiving.’

—H. B. MARRIOTT-WATSON.



# I

## LEASEHOLD MARRIAGE À LA MEREDITH

‘Twenty years of Romance make a woman look like a wreck ; twenty years of Marriage make her look like a public building.’ —OSCAR WILDE.

LEASEHOLD marriage was one of the customs of early Roman society. Nowadays it has a revolutionary savour, and is so apparently impracticable that it would be hardly necessary to do more than touch upon it here, but for the fact that its most recent and most distinguished advocate in modern times is Mr George Meredith. Any suggestion from such a source must necessarily receive careful consideration. It was also advanced by the great philosopher Locke, and was considered by Milton.

It is scarcely three years since our veteran novelist cast this bombshell into a delighted, albeit disapproving Press ; but as memories are so short nowadays, perhaps a brief recapitulation of the circumstances might not be amiss.

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The beginning of the business was a letter to *The Times* by Mr Cloudesly Brereton complaining of the 'growing handicap of marriage' and, according to invariable custom, attacking women as the cause of it. He stated that in the middle classes 'the exigencies of modern wives are steadily undermining the attractions of matrimony; in her ever-growing demands on her husband's time, energy, and money the modern married woman constitutes a very serious drag, and in the lower classes of society, marriage even seriously militates against a man's finding work.' How women can be held responsible for this last injustice was wisely not stated. It would have been difficult to prove the indictment, I think.

This document's chief claim to interest was the discussion in *The Daily Mail* that followed it, and the curious fact that the writer was married a few weeks after its publication! The usual abuse on marriage in general and women in particular followed, until the late Mrs Craigie joined the discussion, and brought to bear on it that peculiar quality of tender understanding, that wonderful insight into women's hearts, which were among the most striking characteristics of her brilliant work.

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It would be a pity to quote from such a letter, so I reproduce it in full.

‘ Women, where their feelings are in question, are not selfish enough: they appraise themselves not too dearly, but too cheaply: it is the suicidal unselfishness of modern women which makes the selfishness of modern bachelors possible. Bachelors are not all misogynists, and the fact that a man remains unmarried is no proof that he is insensible to the charm of woman’s companionship, or that he does not have such companionship, on irresponsible terms, to a most considerable degree. Why should the average vain young man, egoistic by organism and education, work hard or make sacrifices for the sake of any particular woman, while so many are too willing to share his life without joining it, and so many more wait eagerly on his steps to destroy any chivalry or tenderness he may have been born with? Modern women give bachelors no time to miss them and no opportunity to need them. Their devotion is undisciplined and it becomes a curse rather than a blessing to its object. Why? Because women have this strange power of concentration and self-abnegation in their love; they

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cannot do enough to prove their kindness; and when they have done all and been at no pains to secure their own position, they realise they have erred through excess of generosity and the desire to please. This is the unselfishness shown towards bachelors.'

In answer to this letter, another woman novelist, Miss Florence Warden, challenged Mrs Craigie as to the existence of such women, but elicited no further reply. *The Daily Mail* commented on it thus: 'Hundreds of thousands of our readers can give an answer to this remarkable statement out of their own experience, and we have little doubt as to what the tenor of that answer will be.' One can imagine that this was written with a view to being read at the breakfast-tables of Villadom; but men and women of the world, whose experience is not confined to Villadom, nor their opinions of life coloured by the requirements of the Young Person, will recognise the undoubted truth of Mrs Craigie's statements. Whilst agreeing that the state of things between the sexes which she describes is a true one, I venture respectfully to differ as to women's motive for this 'excess of generosity.' There

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is an enormous amount of wonderful unselfishness among women, but it does not expend itself in this direction, in my opinion. Rather is the motive a passionate desire for their own enjoyment, the gratification of their own vanity by pleasing the opposite sex, often at the cost of their own self-respect. H. B. Marriott-Watson takes the same view in a subsequent letter, where he says: 'Women's unselfishness does not extend to the region of love. The sex attraction is practically inconsistent with altruism, and the measure of renunciation is inversely the measure of affection. This is the order which Nature has established, and it is no use trying to expel her. A woman may lay down her life for the man she loves, but she will not surrender him to a rival.'

Another letter of interest came from Miss Helen Mathers, who stated that 'all women should marry, but no men!'-the advantages of the conjugal state being, in her opinion, entirely on the woman's side.

At this point appeared Mr Meredith's contribution to the discussion in the less authoritative form of an interview—not a letter or article, as, after this lapse of time, so many

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people seem to imagine. On re-reading this interview recently, I was struck with Mr Meredith's peculiarly old-fashioned ideas about women. Where the woman question was concerned the clock of his observation seems to have stopped many decades ago.

‘The fault at the bottom of the business,’ he affirms, ‘is that women are so uneducated, so unready. Men too often want a slave, and frequently think they have got one, not because the woman has not often got more sense than her husband, but because she is so inarticulate, not educated enough to give expression to her real ideas and feelings.’

This was before the vogue of the suffragettes, but it is a sufficiently surprising statement for 1904. He continues: “It is a question to my mind whether a young girl, married, say, at eighteen, utterly ignorant of life, knowing little of the man she is marrying, or of any other man in the world at all, should be condemned to live with him for the rest of her life. She falls out of sympathy with him, say, has no common taste with him, nothing to share with him, no real communion except a physical one. The life is nearly intolerable, yet many

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women go on with it from habit, or because the world terrorises them.'

This is true enough, but Mr Meredith speaks as if it were still the rule, as in our grandmothers' day, for a girl to marry in the teens, whereas it is now quite the exception. Every year the marrying age seems to advance, and blushing brides decked in orange blossoms are led to the altar at an age when, fifty years ago, they would be resigned old maids in cap and mittens. If a girl is foolish enough to marry immediately she is out of the schoolroom, she must be prepared to take the enormous risk which the choice of a husband at such an immature age must entail.

Elsewhere Mr Meredith says: 'Marriage is so difficult, its modern conditions are so difficult, that when two educated people want it, nothing should be put in their way. . . . Certainly one day the present conditions of marriage will be changed. It will be allowed for a certain period, say ten years, or—well, I do not want to specify any particular period. The State will see sufficient money is put by to provide for and educate the children. Perhaps the State will take charge of this fund. There

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will be a devil of an uproar before such a change can be made. It will be a great shock, but look back and see what shocks there have been and what changes have nevertheless taken place in this marriage business in the past.'

'The difficulty,' he continues, 'is to make English people face such a problem. They want to live under discipline more than any other nation in the world. They won't look ahead, especially the governing people. And you must have philosophy, though it is more than you can hope to get English people to admit the bare name of philosophy into their discussion of such a question. Again and again, notably in their criticism of America, you see how English people will persist in regarding any new trait as a sign of disease. Yet it is a sign of health.'

It will be seen that Mr Meredith puts forward the ten-year limit merely as a suggestion. I recall in one of Stevenson's essays an allusion to a lady who said: 'After ten years one's husband is at least an old friend,' and her answer was: 'Yes, and one would like him to be that and nothing more.' The decade seems to have a special significance in marriage.

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After the trying first year is over, most couples settle down comfortably enough until nearing the tenth year. The president of the Divorce Court has called this the danger zone of married life. One of the subsequent letters in *The Daily Mail*, approving Mr Meredith's suggestion, alluded to the present form of marriage as 'the life-sentence,' and suggested a still shorter time limit, five years for choice, since during that time a couple would have found happiness or the reverse, and in the latter case ten years was too long to wait for freedom.

A writer in another paper cited America as an example of terminable marriage in full working order. 'It appears from the statement of an American bishop that the people of the United States are actually living under Mr Meredith's conditions already. Last year (1903) as many as 600,000 American marriages were dissolved. This means that there was one divorce to every four marriages. In some districts the proportion was more like one to two. And the most frequent cause of divorce was a desire for change!'

It seems to me that the establishment of a leasehold marriage system would only result

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in wholesale wretchedness and confusion, beside which the present sum of marital misery would be but a drop in the ocean. If our marriage laws must be modified, let us trust it will not be in this direction, though it is obvious enough that such a change would come as a boon to thousands of men and women, who from one cause or another have come to loathe the tie that binds them. Whether it would not also disturb the prosaic content that passes for happiness with millions more is too big a question to be more than mentioned here.

The fate of those who are tied for life to lunatics, criminals, and drunkards is pitiable indeed, but an extension of the laws of divorce would meet their exceptional case, without disturbing the marriage bond of normal people. I have endeavoured to indicate some of the many difficulties of leasehold marriage in the following dialogue.

## II

### LEASEHOLD MARRIAGE IN PRACTICE A DIALOGUE IN 1999

‘There is one thing that women dread more than celibacy—it is repudiation.’ —MARCEL PRÉVOST.

*Katharine and Margaret, both attractive women on the borderland of forty, are lunching together. They are old friends and have not met for years*

*Margaret.* ‘How nice it is to be together again, but I’m sorry to find you so changed; you don’t look happy, what is the trouble?’

*Katharine.* ‘I ought to look happy, I’ve had wonderful luck, but the truth is, I’m utterly tired. The conditions of marriage nowadays are horribly wearing, don’t you think?’

*M.* ‘Well, of course, we miss that feeling of peace and security that our mothers talked of, but then we also miss that ghastly monotony. Think of living year after year, thirty, forty, fifty years, with the same

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man! How tired one would get of his tempers.'

*K.* 'I'm not so sure of that. Monotony of tempers is better than variety. All people have them, anyway. Besides, I've a notion that our fathers were nothing like so difficult to live with as our husbands are. You see, in the old days they knew they were fixed up for life, and that acted as a curb. We seem to miss that curb nowadays.'

*M.* 'Yes, there's something in that. I remember my grandmother, who was married at the end of the last century, used to say that her husband was her Sheet Anchor, and he called her his Haven of Rest.'

*K.* 'Oh, I envy them! That's what I want so badly—a haven, an anchor! How peaceful life must have been then before this horrible new system came in.'

*M.* 'People evidently didn't seem to think so, or why should they have altered it? But what's your quarrel with the system? You've had four husbands and changed the first two almost as quickly as the law allowed.'

*K.* 'Yes, and I'm only forty-one. I began too young—at eighteen—but one naturally takes marriage lightly when one knows it's

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only for five years. One enters upon it as thoughtlessly as our happy mothers used to start their flirtations.'

*M.* 'The consequences are rather more serious though; we are disillusioned women at the age when they were still light-hearted girls.'

*K.* 'It's the families that make it so difficult. Fatherhood is quite a cult nowadays. All my husbands have been of a philoprogenitive turn, and I have eight children.'

*M.* 'Eight children! No wonder you look worried.'

*K.* 'Exactly! my mother would have been horrified. Two or three was the correct number in her days, four at the utmost, and five a fatality and very rare.'

*M.* 'Well, my dear, you needn't have had so many; you should have curbed that cult of Fatherhood. No woman is compelled to bear children nowadays, as our unfortunate grandmothers were. Have you got all eight with you?'

*K.* 'No, that's just the trouble. I didn't want to have so many, but of course now I've got them I want them with me, and of course their fathers want them too.'

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*M.* ‘Oh dear! how tiresome; that’s the worst of having children in these times. I’m sometimes glad I have none.’

*K.* ‘Then perhaps you don’t know the law about the children of our present marriage system? A sum of money has to be invested annually for each child, in the great State Infant Trust; when the marriage is dissolved the mother has the sole custody of them, unless the father wishes to share it; in the latter case they spend half the year with each parent.’

*M.* ‘It’s fair.’

*K.* ‘I suppose so, but oh! so terribly hard on a mother! My two elder girls are almost grown up, they’ve been at a boarding school for some time, and it was easy and natural enough for George and I to share them in the holidays, but now, I can’t keep them at the school any longer, and they will have to spend half the year with him. Thank heaven, he hasn’t been married for some time, and isn’t likely to again, so I haven’t the horror of a strange woman influencing them, but how can I guide them? how have any real control or influence over them in such circumstances?’

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*M.* 'Yes, that must be very sad for you.'

*K.* 'It's awful, but there's much worse than that. My second husband, Gordon, the father of Arthur and Maggie, is married again, and his wife is jealous of his eldest children, and hates the time when they come to stay. And my little Arthur is so delicate, he requires ceaseless care and studying—I never have a happy moment when he is with them; he doesn't get on well with the other children either, and always returns from the visits looking ill and wretched. I couldn't tell you all I have suffered on account of Arthur! Oh! when I think of him, I could curse this infamous marriage system—it is a sin against nature!'

*M.* 'But, my dear, it's no use abusing the laws. Why didn't you stay with Gordon, or in the first instance with George? It's often done, even now.'

*K.* 'I know, I know, but George and I were utterly unsuited—we married as boy and girl. Under the old system prudent parents generally intervened, and the young couple were obliged to wait until they were sure of their own minds. But you know how things are now; in one's first young infatua-

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tion, one is sure of five years ahead at least, and one doesn't need to look beyond that.'

*M.* 'Well, you were twenty-four when you married Gordon; why didn't you choose him more carefully?'

*K.* 'That was largely "a matter of economics" as I read in an old play called *Votes for Women*, not long ago—so quaint their ideas were in those days!—and there was something in it too about "twenty-four used not to be so young, but it's become so!" Still, I was old enough to know better, but I was light-hearted and luxury-loving, and I couldn't live on that pittance, which was all the law compelled George to allow me. I don't blame him, it was all he could do to save the necessary tax for the children. So I married Gordon for a home, and of course it was hateful!'

*M.* 'And your third husband died?'

*K.* 'Yes; the one who should have lived generally dies. I lost him after two years only, but I can't talk of him, dear; he was just my Man of Men.'

*M.* 'Ah! I'm glad you have had that.'

*K.* 'Oh! I have been lucky with all my troubles, as I told you. I was alone for four

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years after I lost my Best, and I should like to have been faithful to him for ever. But I wasn't strong enough ; in spite of the dear children I was very lonely, as the elder ones were always at school.'

*M.* 'Yes, and one wants a man, somehow, to fuss round one.'

*K.* 'True, it's a fatal weakness. So at last I married my good little Duncan, just for companionship. I chose *him* carefully enough. Experience has taught me a lot, and I didn't mean to be left in the lurch at forty as so many are.'

*M.* 'I'm glad he's good to you. Yes ; it's fearful how many women get left alone just when they need care and love most, when their looks and freshness are gone, and their energy weakened. But, as you haven't got that to fear, why should you be so worried now ?'

*K.* 'It isn't exactly that I'm worried—I'm used up ! Twenty years of uncertain domestic arrangements is enough to wear out anyone. I've never been able to feel settled in any house, or let myself get attached to a place, or plant out a garden even. One's set of friends is always breaking up ; people never

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seem to buy houses and estates now, or to get rooted anywhere. In the novels of fifty years ago, how they used to complain about being in a groove! They little knew how miserable life could be for want of a permanent groove.'

*M.* 'I dislike monotony, but it certainly has its advantages. You remember my first husband, Dick?—such a good-looking boy—he was crazy about golf and outdoor games. I got quite into his way of living, and it was a great trial when I married Cecil Innes, who hated the open air, and cared only for books and grubbing about in museums.'

*K.* 'Why did you leave Dick?'

*M.* 'I didn't really want to, we were very comfy together, but he fell in love with another woman. He was mad about her, and asked me to release him. As I had no children, I thought it only fair to agree. Cecil interested me very much at first, and he adored me, but I had a very dreary time with him. You know I'm not a bit literary, and he was so "precious" and bookish, he bored me to death. I was glad to leave him for Jack, my present husband, but Cecil's grief at parting was so frightful I shall never

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forget it, and when he died soon after I felt like a murderer.'

*K.* 'It must have been a painful experience, but one gets accustomed to these tragedies, one hears of so many. There is always one who wants to be free, and one to remain bound.'

*M.* 'Yes; and the unwritten tradition that it is a matter of honour never to seek to hold an unwilling partner quite negatives the law that a marriage can only terminate when both parties desire it.'

*K.* 'I'm sure the tragedies of parting one hears of nowadays are far worse than the occasional tragedies in the old days, caused by being bound, and ever so much more frequent.'

*M.* 'It wouldn't be such an irony if *anyone* were benefited, but as far as I can see the men suffer nearly as much as the women, especially when they are old. According to our early century newspapers, an old bachelor or widower could always get a young and charming wife, but now nobody will marry an elderly man, except the old ladies, and the men don't want them."

*K.* 'It's a pity they don't, that would solve

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a lot of the unhappiness one sees around. It must be awful to be deserted in one's old age.'

*M.* 'Talking about the old newspapers, it's very amusing to read them in the British Museum, and see what wonderful things were expected of the leasehold marriage system when it was first legalised. All the abuses of the old system were to disappear: divorce, adultery, prostitution, and seduction—all the social evils were to go in one clean sweep.'

*K.* 'How absurdly shortsighted people were then. Divorce is abolished, it's true, but the scandals and misery, broken hearts and broken homes that it caused are now multiplied a thousand times. Infidelity may be less frequent, but if people have the wish and the opportunity for it they're not likely to wait for a certain number of years, until it ceases to be technically a sin. The same with the other evils. There will always be a large number of men who postpone marriage for financial or other reasons, and a large number of women who can only earn a living in one way—the oldest profession in the world will always be kept going! Seduction, too, is not likely to cease as long as the law

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is so lenient to it. There will always be ignorant, silly, unprotected girls and always men to take advantage of them.'

*M.* 'There seem to be just as many elderly spinsters, too, as before; the women who don't attract men remain the same under any system, and often they are the best women.'

*K.* 'How strange it must be *never to have had a husband!*'

*M.* 'It must be peaceful, at anyrate; but spinsters don't look any happier than married women.'

*K.* 'I can only see one good result of the leasehold system—that women are as anxious for motherhood now as in the early century they were anxious to avoid it. We grow old with the fear of almost certain desertion and loneliness before us, and the one hope for our old age is our children— Oh ! I am sorry, I forgot you had none.'

*M.* 'Never mind, I often think of it, and whenever Jack admires or pays attention to another woman, I am in terror for fear he has found a fresh attraction and may want to leave me. What stuff they used to write formerly about the necessity for love being free. As if freedom were such a glorious thing !'

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Why, we are all slaves to some convention or passion or theory; none of us are free, really free, and we wouldn't like it if we were. It may be all very well for the fantastic love of novels to be free, but that strange *need of each other*, which we call "love" in real life, for want of a better term—that must be forged into a bond, or what help is it to us poor vacillating mortals? Love must be an Anchor in real life—nothing else is any use!'

### III

#### THE FIASCO OF FREE LOVE

‘The ultimate standards by which all men judge of behaviour is the resulting happiness or misery.’

‘Conduct whose total results, immediate and remote, are injurious is bad conduct.’ —HERBERT SPENCER.

FREE love has been called the most dangerous and delusive of all marriage schemes. It is based on a wholly impossible standard of ethics. Theoretically, it is the ideal union between the sexes, but it will only become practical when men and women have morally advanced out of all recognition. When people are all faithful, constant, pure-minded, and utterly unselfish, free marriage may be worth considering. Even then, there would be no chance for the ill-favoured and unattractive.

Under present conditions no couple living *openly* in free love is known to have made a success of it—a solid, permanent success, that is. I believe there are couples who live happily together without any more durable bond

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than their mutual affection, but they wisely assume the respectable shelter of the wedding ring, and call themselves Mr and Mrs. Thus their little fledgling of free love is not required to battle against the overwhelming force of social ostracism. And moreover one has no means of knowing how long these unions stand the supreme test of time. The two notable modern instances of free love that naturally rise to the mind are George Eliot and Mary Godwin. But both the men with whom they mated were already married. As soon as Harriet was dead, Mary Godwin married Shelley, and when George Lewes had passed away, George Eliot married another man—an act which most people consider far less pardonable in the circumstances than her irregular union with Lewes. Even the famous Perfectionists of Oneida relapsed into ordinary marriage on the death of their leader, Noyes, and by his own wish.

As an institution, free love seems widely practised in the East End of London, but judging by the evidence of the police courts its results are certainly not encouraging. I am told that the practice is common among the cotton operatives of Lancashire. The

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*collage* system is also very prevalent in France among the working classes, and seems to answer well enough. But only when women have the ability and the opportunity to support themselves is free marriage at all feasible from the economic standpoint, and even then there remains the serious question of illegitimacy. All right-minded persons must acknowledge that the attitude of society towards the illegitimate is unjust and cruel in the extreme, resulting as it does in punishing the perfectly innocent. But every grown man and woman is aware of this attitude, and those who act in defiance of it, to please themselves or to satisfy some whim of experiment, do so in the full knowledge that on their child will fall a certain burden of lifelong disadvantage. Many perhaps are deterred from breaking the moral law by this knowledge, but the number of illegitimate born in England and Wales in 1905 was 37,300 ; and, in the interests of these unfortunate victims of others' selfishness, I think it is high time a more kindly and broad-minded attitude towards their social disability was adopted.

I remember as a young girl going to see

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a play called *A Bunch of Violets*. The heroine discovers that her husband's previous wife is alive and that her child is therefore illegitimate. She tells her daughter to choose between the parents, explaining the worldly advantages of staying with her rich, influential father. The harangue concludes with words to the effect: 'With me you will be poor and shamed, and *you can never marry*.' Doubtless this ridiculous point of view was adopted solely for the benefit of the young girls in the audience, but its unreasonableness disgusted me for one. Even to the limited intelligence of seventeen it is obvious that, since a name is of so much importance in life, an illegitimate girl had better marry as quickly as she possibly can, in order to obtain one!

Free love has recently been much discussed in connection with socialism, and, thanks no doubt to the misrepresentations of certain newspapers, the idea seems to have gained ground that the abolition of marriage and the substitution of free love was part of the socialist programme. No more untrue charge could possibly be made, as inquiries at the headquarters of the various socialist bodies will quickly prove.

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The people who advocate free love are very fond of arguing that so personal a matter only concerns themselves. All who think thus should have had a grave warning in a recent *cause célèbre*, in which murder, attempted suicide, permanent maiming, and a tangle of misery involving innocent children down to the third generation, were proved to have resulted from a 'free' union entered on nearly thirty years before. This and the many other tragedies of free love, which appear in the newspapers from time to time, seem to prove the mistake of imagining that we are accountable to none for our actions. A relationship which affects the future generation can never be a private and personal matter. E. R. Chapman in a very interesting essay on marriage published some years ago says: 'To exchange legal marriage for mere voluntary unions, mere temporary partnerships, would be not to set love free, but to give love its death blow by divorcing it from that higher human element which is the note of marriage, rightly understood, and which places regard for order, regard for the common weal above personal interest and the mere self-gratification of the moment.'

## IV

### POLYGAMY AT THE POLITE DINNER-TABLE

‘Last and hardest of all to eradicate in our midst, comes the monopoly of the human heart which is known as marriage . . . this ugly and barbaric form of serfdom has come in our own time by some strange caprice to be regarded as of positively divine origin.’

—GRANT ALLEN.

WE call it the polite dinner-table, because we never hesitate to be extremely rude to each other, when necessary for the purposes of argument. On this particular occasion, the inevitable marriage discussion, which is always to be found in one or other of the newspapers, was the subject of conversation, and the Good Stockbroker (unmarried) was vigorously defending the Holy Estate. His moral attitude is certainly somewhat boring, but nevertheless the Good Stockbroker is one of those people to whom one really is polite. Although obvious irritation was visible on the face of the Family Egotist we listened respectfully, with the exception of the

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Wicked Stockbroker, whose dinner was far too important in his scheme of life to be trifled with by moral conversations.

Whatever the Good Stockbroker says the Weary Roué is of course bound to contradict as a matter of honour. I may mention that the Weary Roué is a man of the highest virtue and a model husband and father. His pose of evil experience has gained him his sarcastic nickname, but in no way has he earned it by his conduct. ‘You forget,’ he interposed languidly, when the Good Stockbroker paused, ‘that no less a philosopher than Schopenhauer said that the natural tendency of man is towards polygamy, and of woman towards monogamy.’

‘I deny the first statement,’ said the Good Stockbroker heatedly. He was always heated where questions of morality were concerned, and was proceeding to give chapter and verse for what promised to become a somewhat dull discussion when the Bluestocking firmly interposed in her small staccato pipe:

‘To hear you, one would suppose monogamic marriage was a divine institution.’

‘Absurd, isn’t it?’ grinned the Weary Roué. The Good Stockbroker looked pained

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and cleared his throat. At this formidable signal, the Family Egotist—whose irritation had been increasing like the alleged circulation of a newspaper—showed every sign of hurling the boomerang of his opinion into the fray. This would have meant the death of all liveliness for some hours to come, and a general sigh had begun to heave, when once more our brave Bluestocking stemmed the tide.

‘You make rather a cult of the Bible,’ she quacked scornfully, directing her remarks principally at the Good Stockbroker; ‘but you don’t seem very conversant with the Old Testament. You will find there ample proof that monogamic marriage is no more divine than—than polygamy or free love. Nor has it any celestial origin, since it varies with race and climate. It is simply an indispensable social safeguard.’

‘I’ll have a shilling each way on it,’ murmured the Ass (an incorrigible youth, quite the Winston Churchill of our family cabinet), using his customary formula. Unheeding, the Bluestocking chirruped on severely: ‘You must know, if you have ever studied sociology, that marriage is essentially a *social contract*, primarily based on selfishness. At present it

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still retains its semi-barbarous form, and those who preach without reason of its alleged sacredness would be better employed in suggesting how the savage code now in vogue can be modified to meet the necessities of modern civilisation.'

She paused for breath. The Good Stock-broker was pale, but faced her manfully. 'Well done, Bluestocking!' said the Weary Roué. 'Wonderful woman, our Quacker,' said the Ass, 'I'll have a shilling each way on her.' The Wicked Stockbroker took a second helping of salad, and ate on unheeding, whilst the Gentle Lady at the head of the table anxiously watched the Family Egotist, who looked apoplectic and was toying truculently with a wineglass with evident danger of shortening its career of usefulness.

'I was taught,' said the Good Stockbroker slowly, 'to regard marriage as a sacred institution—a holy mystery.'

'Then you were taught rot,' snapped the Bluestocking, thus living up to the worst traditions of the polite dinner-table, and quivering with intellectual fury.

'Recrimination—' began the Good Stock-broker.

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(‘Good word that, I’ll have a shilling each way on it,’ murmured the Ass.)

‘— is not argument,’ continued the Good Stockbroker.

‘It may not be, but what you said was *rot*,’ replied the Bluestocking, ‘“a holy mystery, instituted in the time of man’s innocence”— I recognise the quotation! And when was that time, pray? Are you referring to the Garden of Eden, or to what part of the Bible? The chosen people, the Hebrews, were polygamists from the time of Lamech, evidently with the approval of the Deity. Even the immaculate David had thirteen wives, and the saintly Solomon a clear thousand. Not much of a holy mystery in those days, eh?’

‘Dear Bluestocking, you really *are*—’ murmured the Gentle Lady.

‘Not at all; she’s perfectly sound,’ interposed the Weary Roué, gloating with ghoulish joy over the Good Stockbroker’s apparent discomfort.

‘I give in,’ said the latter, and a yell of joy burst from the Ass and the Weary Roué. ‘I really cannot argue against a lady of such overwhelming eloquence,’ he continued, bow-

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ing in his delightful courtly way. ‘All the same, I shall always believe that marriage is a holy institution.’

‘My dear old chap,’ said the Weary Roué, hastily, with one eye on the Family Egotist, who was certainly being treated badly that evening: ‘your high-mindedness is admirable, quite admirable, but it won’t work; it doesn’t fit into modern conditions. Theoretically, Marriage is a Holy Mystery no doubt—in practice it’s apt to be an Unholy Muddle, sometimes a Mess. Personally I believe in polygamy.’

Roars of laughter were stifled in their birth, as we thought of the Weary Roué’s circumspect spouse, and his several circumspect children, discreet from birth upwards.

‘So do I—a shilling each way,’ said the Ass, inevitably.

‘Not for myself, of course,’ continued the Weary Roué, without a trace of a smile, ‘that is to say, not—er—not now, but speaking for the majority and—er, in the abstract, polygamy would be a sensible institution. Just think how it would simplify all our modern complications, how it would mend our two worst social evils.’

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‘Yes, *think*, please—thinking will do,’ interposed the Gentle Lady, hastily.

‘How it would solve the superfluous woman question,’ continued the Weary Roué, enthusiastically. ‘Think of the enormous number of miserable spinsters who would be happily provided for.’ An indignant quack came from the Bluestocking.

‘Think of the expense,’ remarked the Good Stockbroker, dryly, and the Weary Roué collapsed like a pricked gas-bag.

‘Herbert Spencer says,’ continued the Good Stockbroker, ‘that the tendency to monogamy is innate, and all the other forms of marriage have been temporary deviations, each bringing their own retributive evils. After all, monogamous marriage was instituted for the protection of women, and has been held sacred in the great and noble ages of the world. Quite apart from the moral point of view, however, polygamy could only be possible in a tropical climate, where the necessities of life were reduced to a minimum, and one could live on dates and rice, but as the average man in our glorious Free Trade country can’t afford to keep one wife, in decent comfort, let alone several

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—I ask, how in the name of the bank rate—?’

‘You stockbroking chaps are so devilish sordid,’ returned the Weary Roué. ‘Didn’t I say *in the abstract*? Of course I know it wouldn’t do practically, not yet anyway, but honestly I believe it would go far to solve the whole sex problem.’

‘You neither of you seem to take the woman into consideration at all,’ piped the Bluestocking. ‘Do you suppose we modern women with our resources and our education would consider such an idea for a moment?’

‘Well, what do you think?’ asked the Weary Roué, with diplomatic deference.

To our surprise the Bluestocking began to blush, and her blush is not the coy, irresponsible flushing of an ordinary girl, but a painful rush of blood to the face under stress of deep earnestness, the kind of blush which forces one to look away.

‘Well,’ she said, with a gulp, ‘I think, perhaps—they might.’ It was obvious the admission had cost her something. We were all dumfounded. The Family Egotist forgot his burning desire for speech and ceased to threaten his wineglass; the Gentle Lady was

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quite excited ; the Weary Roué became almost alert, and the Good Stockbroker looked as if he were about to burst into tears.

‘I think women might not be averse from polygamy—as a choice of evils,’ continued the little Bluestocking bravely, ‘for the present waste of womanhood in this country is a very serious evil. Of course the financial conditions make it impossible, as the Good Stockbroker says, but if it *were* possible, if it were instituted for highest motives, and in an entirely honourable, open manner authorised and sanctioned by the—er—the proper people—I think women could concur in it without any loss of self-respect, especially if the first ardent love of youth were over. After that, and when a woman forgets herself, having truly found herself, in the love and care of her children and a larger view of life and its duties—then I think most women could be happy in such circumstances. I think a great deal of utterly untrue stuff is talked about the agony of sexual jealousy, and women’s jealousy especially. Men may suffer thus, I can’t say, but I’m sure women don’t. It’s the humiliation, the unkindness, the *being deceived* and supplanted that hurts so when a

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man is unfaithful. But if it were all fair and above-board, if it were grasped that polygamy is more suited to men's nature, and more likely to make for the happiness of the greatest number of women—their numerical strength being so far in advance of men that they couldn't possibly expect to have a mate each—then I really think, after women had had time to readjust their ideas to this new condition—it may take a generation or more—I think they would accept it gladly, and find peace and contentment in it.'

The Bluestocking paused and looked round the circle of interested faces. Even the Ass was intent on her words, but the Good Stock-broker's eyes were averted and the Bluestocking was quite pale as she continued:

‘Of course the word at once recalls the harem, the zenana, but nothing of that kind would do. The wives would have to live separately, as the Mormons do, each in her own home, with her own circle of interests and duties, her own lifework. No one ought to live in idleness, which is the cause of all sorts of discord and trouble. Every woman should work at something, and to help someone. I'm not thinking now, of

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course, of happily married and contented women, but of the thousands leading miserable, dull, and lonely lives, who would be infinitely happier if they had a certain week to look forward to, at regular recurring intervals, when their husbands would be living with them. It would bring love and human interest and, what is most important of all, a *motive* into their existence. I know it sounds dreadfully immoral,' she went on, blushing again painfully, 'but, oh! I don't mean it like *that*. After all, the chief reason why people marry is for companionship, and it is companionship that unmarried women, past the gaiety of first youth, chiefly lack. The natural companion of woman is man; therefore, as there aren't enough husbands to go round, it follows that one might do worse than share them. I don't say it would be as satisfactory as having a devoted husband all to oneself, but it might be for the greatest good of the greatest number, and it would surely solve to a certain extent the—the social evils.'

They all clapped when she had finished somewhat breathlessly. It was obvious that the brave Bluestocking so far lacked the

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courage of her opinions as to be agonisingly embarrassed at this public expression of them. The Gentle Lady, who is the most tactful creature in existence, accordingly rose before anyone had time to speak, and the two women left the room together.

A babble of talk arose from the men, under cover of which the Good Stockbroker also slipped quietly away.

‘Pass the port,’ said the Wicked Stockbroker, briskly. ‘She’s a deuced bright little woman, but how even the brainy ones can be so ignorant of life beats me, and how you chaps can be such hypocrites. . . .!’

‘Hypocrites! what d’you mean?’ blustered the Family Egotist, who was by now almost bursting with suppressed talk.

‘Not you, old chap, but the Weary Roué and the Good Stockbroker, jawing away as if they really thought monogamy was in the majority in this country, and polygamy was something new! Of course one expects it from the G. S., but you, W. R., really ought to know better—by the way, where is the G. S.?’

‘I think he must have gone to propose to the Bluestocking—to save her from polygamy

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and her own opinions,' drawled the Weary Roué, lighting his cigarette.

‘Stout fella! I believe he has!’ cried the Ass, excitedly. ‘I’ll have a shilling each way on it with any of you—I mean it, really! ’

‘Oh! what if he has?’ said the Family Egotist, irritably. ‘What does one fool more in the world matter? Do stop rotting, you fellows, and pass the port.’

## V

### IS LEGALISED POLYANDRY THE SOLUTION?

IN Mr W. Somerset Maugham's very interesting psychological study, *Mrs Craddock*, he makes one of his characters say: 'The fact is that few women can be happy with only one husband. I believe that the only solution of the marriage question is legalised polyandry.'

This is the kind of statement which it is only respectable to receive with horror, but if the secrets of feminine hearts could be known it might prove that a goodly amount of this horror is assumed. I decline to commit my sex either way. Mr Maugham is evidently a gentleman very deeply experienced in feminine hearts, and I daresay he knows what he is talking of. He is, moreover, safely unmarried, but even he entrenches himself behind one of the characters in his novel, and who am I that a greater courage should be expected of me?

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There is, of course, a marvellous virtue in the word 'legalised.' The most unholy and horrible marriages between fair young girls and rich or titled dotards, drunkards, or *cretins* are considered perfectly proper and respectable because 'legalised.' Yet the people who countenance these abominations would probably be unutterably shocked by the very whisper of polyandry—an infinitely more decent relation, because regulated by honest sex attraction, and free presumably from mercenary considerations. But whether legalised polyandry is THE solution to the marriage question or not, it is clearly an impossible one for women-ridden England, and though of late years women have made startling strides, and shown themselves possessed of unsuspected vitality, it seems unlikely that their superfluous energies will be expended in this direction.

## VI

### A WORD FOR DUOGAMY

‘God made you, but you marry yourself.’

—R. L. STEVENSON.

THE day after the polite dinner-party, Isolda, Miranda, and Amoret came in to tea, and I retailed to them the discussion of the previous evening on polygamy.

‘I see the Bluestocking’s point,’ said Isolda, thoughtfully: ‘polygamy might be acceptable to the superfluous woman who can’t marry under present conditions—the discontented spinster to whom the single state is so detestable that even polygamy would be preferable—but it would never be acceptable to the woman who can and does marry.’

‘Yet how many married women put up with it nowadays?’ said Miranda; ‘aren’t there ever so many wives who condone their husband’s infidelity, and endure it as best they can, for the sake of the children, or for social reasons, or because they’re sufficiently attached

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to the man to prefer a share of him to life alone without him? And what is that but countenancing polygyny?’

‘Ah! but then the other women are only mistresses,’ exclaimed Isolda. ‘One might tolerate that unwillingly, but another legal wife, with rights equal to one’s own or, worse, with children to compete with one’s own—never!’

‘Well, perhaps not,’ agreed Miranda; ‘I suppose a legal and permanent rival would be somewhat different, but, after all, it’s only the middle class in England who can be termed strictly monogamous—the upper and lowest are as polygynous as can be. It’s only our British hypocrisy that makes us pretend monogamy is our rule!’

‘Don’t quarrel with British hypocrisy,’ said Amoret, lazily, ‘it’s our most valuable national asset. Hypocrisy simply holds the fabric of society together.’

‘Agreed,’ said Isolda, ‘we must pretend to believe monogamy is the rule, for peace sake, and for the ideal’s sake. Of course everybody knows there are plenty of polygynous husbands about, and, for the matter of that, polyandrous wives, but hypocrisy is

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a great aid to decency, and a nation must have decency of *theory* at least, if not of practice, or we should—er—h'm—decline like the Romans.'

'I was waiting for one of you to mention the Romans,' interposed Amoret, who for all her frivolity has a certain humorous shrewdness of her own. 'It's an invariable feature of all discussions on marriage. Directly one so much as breathes a suggestion that the marriage tie should be made more flexible to suit modern conditions, everyone present, except the unhappily married, pulls a long face and quotes the awful example of the Romans. Now I've got a gorgeous idea for solving the marriage problem.'

'Tell us,' cried three voices in unison.

'Not yet, let's get rid of the Romans first. I confided my idea to a man the other day, and when he had floored me with the Romans as usual, I went and looked up Gibbon.'

Laughter interrupted her: the idea of our butterfly Amoret poring over Gibbon.

'Yes, I did,' she continued, 'and, as far as I could make out, it wasn't their easy ideas about marriage that caused their decline, but

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their—what shall I say?—their general moral slackness. . . .

‘I know,’ said Isolda, coming to the rescue. ‘I was reading a frightfully interesting book about it the other day, *Imperial Purple*. It was the relaxing of all ideals, the giving way entirely to carnal appetites, the utter lack of moral backbone consequent on excess of luxury and prosperity that smashed up the Romans. But if a strenuous, cold-blooded nation like ourselves chose to relax the stringent conditions of marriage, and kept strictly to the innovation, well, it’s absurd to say all our ideals would deteriorate and the Empire collapse in consequence! ’

‘Hear, hear! Worthy of the Bluestocking herself! ’

‘Very well,’ said Miranda. ‘I’ll give in about the Romans if you like, just so as to get on with the conversation. Now let’s have your gorgeous idea, Amoret.’

‘It’s just this,’ said Amoret. ‘*Duogamy*.’

‘*Duo*—two?’

‘Exactly—two partners apiece. We’re all so complex nowadays that one can’t possibly satisfy us. Two would just do it. Two would serve to relax the tension of married

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life, and yet would not lead to what the newspapers call licence. Everyone would have another chance, and what the first partner lacked would be supplied by the second.'

'It's not such a bad idea,' said Isolda, musingly. 'Launcelot could choose a good walker and bridge player for his alternative wife, and I'd try to find a man who hated cards and never walked a step when he could possibly ride.'

'I think it's a grand idea,' cried Miranda, enthusiastically. 'Lysander could find a woman who'd play his accompaniments and love musical comedies, and I'd look out for a man who made a cult of the higher drama and had two permanent stalls at the Vedrenne-Barker Theatre.'

'It would simply solve everything,' cried Amoret, ecstatically. 'Whenever Theodore was disagreeable, off I'd go to my other one—and yet without feeling I was neglecting him, as he could go to *his* other one. She would probably be a worthy, stolid, stayless lady with none of my faults, and when he was fed up with her stolid staylessness he could come back to me, and my very faults,

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you see, would be pleasing to him by reason of their contrast to hers, and *vice versa*.'

'It's really a wonderful idea,' said Isolda, thoughtfully, 'I wonder no one thought of it before. There would be fewer old maids, as men wouldn't be so terribly shy of matrimony when they knew there would always be that second chance. They wouldn't expect so much from one wife as they do now. And think what a good effect it would have on our manners, too—how kind and polite and self-controlled we would be, under fear of being compared unfavourably with the other one.'

'Yes, it would certainly keep us all up to the mark,' reflected Miranda, 'slovenly wives would make an effort to be smart, and shrewish ones would put a curb on their tongues. Husbands would be quite loverlike and attentive, in their anxiety to outdo the other fellow.'

'It would smooth out the tangles all round,' declared Amoret; 'now just take the cases known to us personally. The Fred Smiths, for instance, haven't spoken to each other for three years, just because Fred fell in love with Miss Brown and spends

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nearly all his time with her. Mrs Smith is broken-hearted, Fred looks miserable enough—a home where no one speaks to you must be simply Hades—and the Brown girl is always threatening to commit suicide. The affair has quite spoilt her life, and it must be very hard luck on the Smith children, growing up in such an atmosphere. My plan would have done away with all this misery: Fred could have married Miss Brown, and gone on living happily at intervals with Mrs Smith.'

‘But what would Mrs Smith do in the intervals? She happens to have found no counter attraction.’

‘Well, perhaps if duogamy had been the custom, she would have looked out for one,’ said Amoret, ‘most married women could find one alternative, I’m sure. But, any way, no plan is perfect, and there are lots of wives who wouldn’t want a second husband at all, and who would be only too glad of a restful period, when no dinners need be ordered. Then take the case of the Robinsons: Dick Jones adores Mrs Robinson and is utterly wretched because he can only be a friend to her. She is very fond of him, and fond

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of her husband too; she could make them both very happy if they would share her.'

'I have often felt I could make two men happy,' said Isolda. 'Some of my best points are wasted on Launcelot. Then, too, he never tires of the country and his beloved golf, but I do, and when one of my fits of London-longing were to come over me I'd just run up to town and have a ripping time with my London husband.'

'Without feeling you were doing anything wrong,' supplemented Amoret, whose apparent experience of the qualms of conscience struck me as being rather suspicious.

'It's no good, girls,' said Miranda, suddenly. 'It's no good—duogamy's off! Think of the servants!'

'Horrors, the servants!' said Isolda, blankly.

'Yes, I was afraid you would soon find out the one weak spot,' said Amoret, regretfully. 'Of course it would be awful having to cope with two lots of servants. One husband could afford to keep four or five, say, and the other only one or two, and each lot would get out of hand during the wife's absence.'

'So instead of having a perfectly deevy time

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with two husbands vying with each other in pleasing one, one would have a fearsome existence constantly breaking-in minions. Directly one had got A.'s servants into order, it would be time to go back to B. and do the same there.'

'No; thank you,' said Isolda, firmly, 'one lot is enough for me. I've said dozens of times, for the servant reason alone, that I wish I had never married. It would be madness to actually double one's burden. You can strike me off the list of duogamists, Amoret, until the Servant Question is solved by some new invention of machinery, or the importation of Chinese.'

'Perhaps,' Amoret suggested hopefully, 'your alternative might consent to live in a hotel.'

'No such luck,' said Isolda, mournfully, 'when a man marries it's mostly for a home —why else should he marry unless it's for the children? Good gracious! I'd forgotten all about the children. Of course that settles it.'

'The *cul-de-sac* of all reforms!' said Ainoret, tragically. 'It's impossible to suggest any revision in the marriage system that isn't

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instantly quashed by the children complication.'

We all sat silent, busy with our thoughts, and then Isolda shuddered.

'Duogamy's no good,' she said emphatically, 'and I *am* so disappointed!'

## VII

### THE ADVANTAGES OF THE PRELIMINARY CANTER

‘Marriage is terrifying, but so is a cold and forlorn old age.’

—R. L. STEVENSON.

Of all the revolutionary suggestions for improving the present marriage system, the most sensible and feasible seems to me marriage ‘on approval’—in other words, a ‘preliminary canter.’ The procedure would be somewhat as follows: a couple on deciding to marry would go through a legal form of contract, agreeing to take each other as husband and wife for a limited term of years—say three. This period would allow two years for a fair trial, after the abnormal and exceptionally trying first year was over. Any shorter time would be insufficient. At the conclusion of the three years, the contracting parties would have the option of dissolving the marriage—the dissolution not to become absolute for another six months, so

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as to allow every opportunity of testing the genuineness of the desire to part. If no dissolution were desired, the marriage would then be ratified by a religious or final legal ceremony, and become permanently binding.

In the case of a marriage dissolved, each party would be free to wed again; but the second essay must be final and permanent from the start. This restriction would be absolutely necessary if the preliminary canter plan is not to degenerate into a species of legalised free love, as there are many men, and some women, who would 'always go on cantering,' as Amoret expressed it once—and the upshot would be nothing less than leasehold marriage for the short term of three years.

It might be urged against this plan that many couples who come to grief in the danger zone of married life—*i.e.* nearing the tenth year—are perfectly happy in the early years. But human love being as mutable as it is, and people and conditions being so liable to change, it is impossible to arrive at any permanent marriage system which allows for this. It must, however, be remembered that, in the majority of unhappy unions, it is

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not the system, but the individuals who are to blame. The institution of the conjugal novitiate would, however, reduce the number of divorces considerably, by making less possible the miserable misfits in temperament now so prevalent. It would give a second chance to those who had made a mistake, yet without resulting in that promiscuity of intercourse which is a danger to society and fatal to the best interests of the race. Of what other scheme can the same be said?

For married women in the novitiate period a new prefix would have to be invented, which they would retain if the union were dissolved. *Mrs* would be the distinguishing prefix of women who had entered on the final and permanent state of matrimony. Whether the wife would take the husband's surname during the probationary term would be another question for decision by the majority; I should incline to her retaining her maiden name with the aforesaid prefix, and only assuming that of the husband with the *Mrs* of finality. But these are mere details.

As regards the important question of the

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children, the issue of a probationary union would, of course, be legitimate, but I think wise people would see to it that no children were born to them until the marriage had been finally ratified. Certainly children would be the exception rather than the rule, but the question of their custody in the case of dissolved marriages would be one requiring the most thoughtful legislation. To divide the child's time between the parents is an undesirable expedient, and one that must to a certain extent be harmful, since a settled existence and routine is so essential for children's well-being. Yet to deprive the father of them altogether is equally undesirable.

The conjugal novitiate is not a new scheme. It was practised prior to the Reformation in Scotland under the name of 'hand-fasting.' The parties met at the annual fairs, and by the ceremony of joining hands declared themselves man and wife for a year. On the anniversary of this function they were legally married by a priest—if all had gone well with them. If they had found the union a failure they parted.

## PART IV

### CHILDREN—THE *CUL-DE-SAC* OF ALL REFORMS

‘An early result, partly of her sex, partly of her passive strain is the founding, through the instrumentality of the first savage Mother, of a new and beautiful social state—Domesticity. . . . One day there appears in this roofless room that which is to teach the teachers of the world—a Little Child.’

—HENRY DRUMMOND.

‘Every good woman is by nature a mother, and finds best in maternity her social and moral salvation. She shall be saved in child-bearing.’

—GRANT ALLEN.

‘Children are a man’s power and his honour.’

—HOBBES.



## I

TO BEGET OR NOT TO BEGET—THE QUESTION  
OF THE DAY

‘Marriage is therefore rooted in family rather than family in marriage.’ —WESTERMARCK.

If we could leave children out of the question, the readjustment of the conjugal conditions would be simple enough. But Amoret has truly called this problem ‘the *cul-de-sac* of all reforms.’ Any system, whatever its form, whether leasehold marriage, free love, polygamy, polyandry, or duogamy—any scheme that tends to confuse the fatherhood of the child, or deprive the child of the solid advantages of a permanent home—is hopeless from the start. This, however, obviously applies only to the couples who have children. Formerly those who married expected to have a family, and were disappointed if this hope were not fulfilled. That it was possible to limit the number of their offspring, or even to avoid parenthood entirely, was of course

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unknown to them. Nowadays all this is changed, and the doctrines of Malthus obtain everywhere.

Bernard Shaw says: 'The artificial sterilisation of matrimony is the most revolutionary discovery of the nineteenth century.' It certainly makes possible the revolutionary suggestions about marriage, or rather *would* make them more feasible if the 'discovery' were universally put into practice.

Let us take it then, that where children are desired no relaxation of our present marriage system is advisable, and that people who wish to experiment in new matrimonial schemes must resolutely avoid the '*cul-de-sac* of all reforms,' and remain childless.

To beget or not to beget—that is the question nowadays, and a very vexed question it is. There is hardly a subject on which opinions are more diversified. Some people regard parenthood as the most horrible disaster; others think that to die without creating is to have lived uselessly. I heard a woman say once: 'I hate children; it's much better to keep a few dear dogs,' and she was not an ignorant or devitalised girl, but a healthy, sensible, fully developed young

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woman of six-and-twenty. Not long ago another woman, in announcing her engagement to me, added in the same breath that she didn't mean to have children on any account. Mr George Moore, in that sinister and repulsive book, *The Confessions of a Young Man* says: 'That I may die childless, that when my hour comes I may turn my face to the wall, saying, I have not increased the great evil of human life—then, though I were murderer, fornicator, thief, and liar, my sins shall melt even as a cloud. But he who dies with children about him, though his life were in all else an excellent deed, shall be held accursed by the truly wise, and the stain upon him shall endure for ever.' (One wonders on reading this why Mr Moore continues to perpetuate the great evil of human life in his own person, when he could so easily end his existence without paining anyone!)

But I have heard many people, both men and women, married and single, say that without children marriage is meaningless, in which opinion I heartily concur. More than one young woman dowered with generous blood, vitality, and courage has confided in me

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that whether she should marry or not she wished to be a mother at all costs. It is one of the disastrous results of men's shrinking from matrimony that fine women like these must deliberately stifle this glorious passion of motherhood, or pay a terrible price for expressing it—a price exacted not only from themselves but from the child to whom they have given life. Such women, however, are not often met with.

And now we come to the reason why people do not want children. 'We can't afford it' is the plea most frequently heard, and a despicably selfish one it is. I have said previously that every man can afford to marry—when he meets the right woman. To this I add that every man who can afford a wife can also afford a child. People who are too selfish to afford a couple of children (or at least one, sad though it be for the youngster to have neither brother nor sister) ought not to marry at all. Some people say they are happy enough without little ones. A good many women deliberately forgo their prospect of motherhood because it would interrupt their pleasures, spoil the hunting season, interfere with their desire to travel or their

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craze for games. Perhaps some day they may think too high a price was paid for indulgence in these hobbies. Others honestly dislike children, and would be entirely at a loss in possessing them. It is as well that such people should have none: the poor little unwanted ones can always be recognised.

‘Delicacy’ is another plea put forward by neurotic women who are not one whit too delicate to bear a child. Where the ill-health is genuine, or some constitutional weakness or disorder is present, of course this plea is sensible enough. An apparently sane woman once told me quite seriously that she would have liked a child, only she often had a bad cough in the winter, and would not risk the possibility of ‘handing it on.’ Her lungs were perfectly sound, it was merely a temporary cough that troubled her. On the same occasion another woman present remarked that she too would have liked a child, only ‘there wouldn’t be room in our flat, and it is so convenient, we shouldn’t like to leave it.’ My state of mind on hearing these remarks could only have been adequately expressed by knocking these two ladies down and trampling on them, and as this course

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would not have found favour with our hostess, I had to content myself with merely being rather rude to them.

I believe the root of the whole matter is that the maternal instinct is not so general as formerly. The causes for this I am not wise enough to determine. It may be due to the greater enfranchisement of women, the widening of women's lives and ambitions, the new occupations, the new interests which have so transformed feminine existence. Maternity and the grievous and irksome processes of its accomplishment are apt to interfere with all this. The instinct of motherhood is still doubtless innate in the majority; when the babies come, often unwelcome, the instinct reasserts itself as a rule, but it is certainly not general for the average woman of to-day to feel it stirring before marriage or actual motherhood, and I honestly believe that the number of women who, like the female bee, are utterly without this instinct is yearly increasing. It has often occurred to me that men are really fonder of children than are women. In my own experience, I hardly know a man who does not love them, whereas I know many women who positively detest

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children, and many others who only endure their own because they must. I have also observed that quite devoted mothers dislike all other children, whereas men, if fond of the little ones at all, seem fond of every child. Note the attention men will pay a not particularly attractive child in a railway carriage, whilst the women present are entirely indifferent to it. A lady who has kept a girls' school for many years told me recently that in her opinion the very nature of girls seems changing, and love of dolls and babies is apparently decaying. Can this be generally true? Is it possible that the higher education of women has such grave drawbacks?

Fortunately for the honour and ideals of our country, the philoprogenitive element is still in an overwhelming majority and many people who for various reasons do not actually want children are ready enough to welcome the Stork if he does elect to pay them a visit. In after years they will tell one that they can't imagine what life would have been like without the noise of little feet throughout the house, the clamour of little voices, the tender faces of little children.

## II

### THE PROS AND CONS OF THE LIMITED FAMILY

‘The child—Heaven’s gift.’

—TENNYSON.

ON the other hand, though I think it the greatest possible mistake for legally married people to intentionally remain childless, for any reason other than mental or physical degeneration, I am strongly against the Lutheran doctrine of unlimited families. Times have changed since Luther’s day, and the necessity for small families is fairly obvious in the twentieth century for all but very wealthy people. Where money is no object, and the parents are thoroughly robust, the great luxury of a large family may be indulged in. And it *is* a luxury, let cynics sneer as they choose. We modern parents with our two and three children, or our one ewe lamb who can scarcely be trusted out of our sight because he is our unique creative effort—we

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miss much of the real domestic joy that our mothers and fathers must have known, with their baker's dozen or so of lusty boys and girls. Our children can't even get up a set of tennis among themselves without borrowing one or more from another household. Much of the anxiety and worry we suffer over our rare offspring was unknown in the days when blessings were numerous, and families ran into two figures as a matter of course.

Nowadays these joys are the luxuries of the wealthy, who, however, rarely avail themselves of this special privilege of riches. With the necessities of life getting dearer every year, a continual panic in the money market, and the pressure of competition assuming nightmare proportions—a small family of two or three children is all the man of moderate income can allow himself. Four is an outside number, but it is worth making some sacrifices to attain it. Professor E. A. Ross has recently stated in *The American Journal of Sociology* that although restriction 'results in diffusion of economic well-being; lessens infant mortality; ceases population pressure, which is the principal cause of war, mass poverty, wolfish competition and class conflict,'

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yet there are ‘disquieting effects, and in one-child or two-child families both parents and children miss many of the best lessons of life; the type to be standardised is not the family of one to three but the family of four to six.’ The German scientist, Möbius, has also stated his opinion that the general adoption of the two-children system would lead to deterioration of the race.

But whether the family numbers one or six, it is all one to Father Bernard Vaughan, who in his violent attack on modern parents draws no distinction between the rich man who has but one child and the hard-working professional man who has several. To limit one’s family at all is in his eyes a heinous and revolting sin, ‘a vile practice,’ and people who do it are ‘traitors to an all-important clause in the sacred contract which they called upon God to witness they meant to keep.’ This last is hardly logical—none of us are responsible for the wording of the marriage service, and we cannot very well interrupt the recital of its barbaric formulæ to explain that there are limitations to our desire for multiplication.

Father Vaughan also says that this disinclination to multiply means ‘the extinction

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of Christian morality,' and constitutes 'defiance of God.' It is not clear to me why a respectable middle-class couple who decide that three children is a more suitable number ~~than twelve or forty~~ for ~~steep~~ an income of, say, £300 a year, should be accused of defying God by this exercise of common-sense self-control. Is the idea that the children will only be sent if the Almighty wishes us to have them, and it is therefore impious to regulate the number? It would be just as fair to accuse a young woman who refuses several offers of marriage of defying God, since He clearly wishes her to marry. Bodily ills and accidents presumably come from the same divine agency, yet no one thinks it sinful to seek to remedy these with the means science has provided for the purpose. Why are the means of regulating families made known to us if we are not to use them when population-pressure becomes acute? The doctrine of Free-will becomes a positive farce if Father Vaughan is right. If he confined his remarks to people who deliberately refuse to have *any* children, he would have found many adherents, but he alienates our sympathy by the very excess of his denunciation. He

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even brands as immoral the practice of regulating the time between the births of children, which is so essential to the mother's health. Apparently he would think it right for a woman to have ~~a baby~~ every eleven months or so, irrespective of her husband's limited income, until she became an ailing wreck or died of over-production, leaving her family in the plight of being motherless. His remarks are of course directed principally at 'smart' society people, but as Father Vaughan considers lack of means no excuse for 'deliberate regulation of the marriage state,' his strictures must be taken as applying to all alike. One feels inclined to echo with a character in *The Merry-Go-Round*: 'In this world it is the good people who do all the harm.'

I learn that as long ago as 1872, before there was any perceptible fall in the birth-rate to consider, an article by Mr Montagu Crackenthorpe, Q.C., appeared in *The Fortnightly Review*, contending that small families were a sign of progress rather than of retrogression. This article was recently republished in a book entitled *Population and Progress*. There are many other books on the subject,

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and to them I must refer those of my readers who desire further knowledge of this very important problem. I have no space for an exhaustive consideration of it here. It is a subject essentially considered by the majority from a narrow, personal point of view, for it is impossible to expect people struggling for existence to 'think imperially,' and put the needs of the Empire before the limitations of their income. The question from the economic standpoint has been exhaustively dealt with by that master of political economy, Mr Sidney Webb in a pamphlet entitled *The Decline of the Birth Rate*, published by the Fabian Society at 1d.

I wish I could convince people, however, of the mistake of having only one child. The loss to the parents is heavy and to the child incalculable. All parents who have tried it know what disadvantages they experience in their early attempts at training, when there is 'no one to play with,' and no one to give up to—perhaps the most important of life's lessons. Two or more children growing up together are twice as easy to manage and to teach as is one alone, and

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infinitely happier in every way. Later on, schoolfellows to a certain extent supply the deficiency, but the only child is still no less an object for commiseration, as are his parents. All their hopes are centred in the one, and, as the circumstances almost inevitably combine to spoil the one, their hopes are more or less handicapped. Parents find out too late that they have made a mistake.

I was at a children's party not long ago where 'sole hopes' were greatly in the majority. A lovely little family trio consisting of a boy and two tiny girls was much admired and the mother openly envied. Several of the mothers present said they often wished that Joan or Tommy had a brother or sister. As few of the children mentioned were over five, the difficulty did not seem insuperable, but opinions were unanimous among the ladies that it was 'too late to start the nursery again'; 'it was no good unless the two could grow up together, five years was too great a gap,' and so on. No doubt they will one day bitterly regret their timidity, as many women to my personal knowledge have already done. Jean or Tommy may be taken from them, or what is worse may turn out unloving and

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undutiful, and in that sad day they will have no other children to turn to.

If the facile writers of those endless newspaper articles on the degeneracy of modern women really wish to make good their case, they had better abandon their foolish complaints as to women's inability to manage the spinning-wheel or preserve pickles, and other tasks which the progress of machinery have rendered unnecessary. Let them instead turn their attention for proof of degeneracy to the strange helplessness of middle-class mothers in training their children, and their dread of nursery complications. I know many a woman whose financial ability and capacity for organising almost amounts to genius, who would doubtless not be at a loss in dealing with a burglar, yet who would on no account face the terrors of a longish railway journey in sole charge of her two-year-old child, whilst to 'take the baby at night' once in a way during the nurse's absence from home is a nerve-shattering experience which necessitates at least one day's complete rest in bed afterwards.

'To start the nursery again,' with all its complicated machinery, when the sole h<sup>8</sup>

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has got over its teething torments, can walk, feed itself, and generally be companionable, is a prospect before which modern mothers seem to quail. The remedy is to multiply the number of hopes before the nursery has time to be outgrown by Hope No. 1, in fact to keep the nursery going a good many years longer than is nowadays fashionable—though by no means for the unlimited period advised by Father Vaughan and other celibate priests entirely ignorant of nurseries and their exigences!

### III

#### PARENTHOOD: THE HIGHEST DESTINY

‘O happy husband ! happy wife !  
The rarest blessing Heaven drops down  
The sweetest treasure in spring’s crown,  
Starts in the furrow of your life.’

—GERALD MASSEY.

PERHAPS I may be accused of dealing with marriage in a too flippant manner. Most of the treatises that I have read have erred in the opposite direction and have treated the subject from a tediously transcendental point of view. I have purposely tried to deal with realities, with facts, with matrimony as it really is—I mean as it really appears to me—in this very workaday world, and not as it might be in a glorious ideal world of noble spirits.

In truth, marriage, as it is carried out by the large majority does not seem to me to possess much of a sacred element. What is there holy in the fact of two human beings agreeing to live together to suit their own

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convenience, for purely social and domestic reasons, and very often with a strong commercial motive? There is, of course, a certain sanctity about all love, but, of the various kinds of human love, the sexual variety seems the least holy in itself. Family love, where the tie of blood exists, the love between friends—purest of all affections—is often more essentially sacred than the so-called holy love between husband and wife. Marriage, the mere social and physical union of men and women, *apart from parenthood*, is simply a partnership—resulting, if you like, in an enormous increase of happiness and good to the contracting parties—essentially an excellent contract, but a mere mundane contract for all that. But when the children come, when the divine and wonderful miracle is accomplished, then, indeed, is marriage placed on a wholly different basis, and in dealing with it, I willingly take my shoes from off my feet, for it is holy ground.

On the birth of a child the union that produced it acquires an immortal significance. Formerly of importance only to the two people concerned, the union is now of importance to the State and to posterity, and consequently

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a truly awful responsibility devolves on the parents. On the physique, the character, the intelligence of each child the fate of future generations may depend. If we do not feed our child properly he may be rickety, and a future generation may be deformed for our carelessness. If we do not teach him thoroughly the duty of self-control he may become a drunkard or a libertine, and a thousand subsequent evils may curse our grandchildren. ‘The responsibilities of perpetuating the existence of a race, with all its immeasurable possibilities of sin and suffering, is one from which the boldest might recoil. But the only effective way of improving the lot of man is to rear up a new generation of better stock. For the reflecting to shirk parentage is to make over the future to the spawn of unreflecting indulgence. In the world’s great field of battle no duty is higher than to keep the ranks of the forces of Light well filled with recruits. It is to no holiday that our offspring are called—rather it is to a combat long and stern, ending in inevitable death.’<sup>1</sup>

It has been truly said that children are the

<sup>1</sup> W. T. Stead, *Review of Reviews*, January 1908.

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wealth of nations: if we were to take our parenthood very seriously indeed—far, far more seriously than we now do, surely this would prove the strongest defence against the moral and physical decay of which we hear so much. I would like to see parenthood elevated to the dignity of a great spiritual ideal. Not that I advocate the ultra-glorification of mere procreation in itself, though to bring fine and healthy children into the world is an excellent service, and one that men and women ought to take the highest pride in, but ‘to summon an immortal soul into being—what act is comparable to this?’ To train the new-born spirit to grow towards the sun, striving to develop in it the nobler possibilities of the complex human organism and make of it an ‘upright, heaven-facing speaker’—what better lifework can a man or woman hope to achieve, what greater monument to leave behind?

If parenthood were to become a great ideal, in time public opinion—that mighty weapon—would grow so strong that unworthy parenthood would be regarded with disfavour by all decent people. The unfit would not dare to commit the crime of perpetuating their kind,

## THE HIGHEST DESTINY

and the stigma attached to this sin against the community might eventually even equal the stigma attached nowadays to the awful crime of cheating at cards!

Inspired by the ideal of noble parenthood, maidens would look for the father's heart in their lovers; men would seek the beautiful maternal qualities in the girls they were wooing, and the material considerations that now so largely influence both would obtain less and less. The bond of marriage would be strengthened a hundredfold. Infidelity would be rarer, for the husband and wife who had been blessed with children would feel that their union had been dignified, made truly indissoluble. The father and mother who had embraced for the first time over the form of their first-born could never forget that ineffable moment. The man and woman who had shared a baby between them, taught it to talk and to play and guided its first faltering steps, could never lightly set aside the vows that bound them. The soft hands of little children were made to link men and women's hearts together, and wonderfully they fulfil the task!

‘Only when we become fathers and mothers

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do we realise all that our fathers and mothers have done for us'—and what a revelation it is! What a new heaven and a new earth are opened to us by the magic of a little child's presence in our home — the little body that has been mysteriously fashioned in our image, the little soul given into our keeping.

But for the children, marriage would indeed be a universal failure. In their interest it was instituted and it is they who make it possible. Children make a happy union perfect and an indifferent one happy. Very often they patch up an utter failure into at least an endurable partnership. When a childless marriage proves happy—really happy—it is generally because the man and woman are particularly attached to each other, or are people of unusual character.

One knows of rare instances where husband and wife have grown dearer and more closely knit by reason of having no other object to divide their affection. The wife, with lesser cares, not needing to merge the sweetheart in the mother, remains more youthful in her husband's eyes than would otherwise be possible, whilst on the man is lavished her maternal as well as her wifely devotion, and

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he is at once husband and child to her. In such a union one can see the sacred element, although it has produced no children; a couple of this kind does not seem to miss the little ones that never come. The same is sometimes the case with artists, whose whole interest and creative energies are absorbed in their work.

With all my heart I despise those married people in full possession of health and strength who deliberately elect to remain childless. With all my heart I pity the celibate and those to whom children are denied. Yet they have compensations—though they lose the rapture, they miss also the infinite anxieties, the innumerable worries, the constant self-denial, the often bitter disappointments. Children bring many other pains than those of birth. Tennyson says, ‘the saddest soul in all the world is she that has a child and sees him err.’ Yet by some subtle alchemy of nature, the strings of mother hearts are sometimes attuned even more tenderly to the children who err. I think one of the most beautiful lines ever written occurs in Stephen Philips’ *Marpessa*. When the maid Marpessa rejects the god in favour

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of the humble mortal lover, of the latter she says:

‘And he shall give me passionate children, not  
Some radiant god that will despise me quite,  
But clamouring limbs, and little hearts that err.’

But the clamouring limbs soon wax great, alas! out of all recognition; the little hearts become wise and worldly and err in a less pleasing manner—our passionate children outgrow us quickly nowadays. That is the real tragedy of motherhood—*to be outgrown*.

## PART V

### HOW TO BE HAPPY THOUGH MARRIED

'To dwell happily together they should be versed in the niceties of the heart and born with a faculty for willing compromise.'

'Goodness in marriage is a more intricate problem than mere single virtue, for in marriage there are two ideals to be realised.'

—R. L. STEVENSON.



# I

## A FEW SUGGESTIONS FOR REFORM

WITHIN the last twenty-five years the worst injustices of our marriage laws have been rectified, and compared with them the remaining grievances appear relatively mild. It is scarcely credible in these days of advanced women that only a few years ago a husband could take possession of his wife's property and spend it as he liked, or, what is still more monstrous, could appoint a stranger as sole guardian to his children after his death, entirely ignoring the natural rights of the mother.

The most serious injustice remaining is that the relief of divorce is more accessible to men than to women. This obviously is a law made by men for their own advantage, but its existence is a blot on the fair fame of English justice, and also of English morality, that a husband's infidelity should be so lightly regarded. Let us hope the day is not far off when the conditions of divorce will be exactly the same for both parties.

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The opinion is almost universally held nowadays that a dissolution of marriage should be obtainable if either party be a confirmed drunkard, or a lunatic, or be sentenced to a long term of imprisonment. How degrading it is to the best instincts of our sex that a woman can get a decree of nullity of marriage by proving certain physical disabilities on the part of the husband, which in no way affect her happiness, health, or self-respect, yet can only obtain the partial relief of separation if her husband be a drunkard, an adulterer, and a criminal—so long as she cannot additionally prove cruelty or desertion! It is also an injustice that divorce should be so expensive that only people with money or the very poor (by means of proceedings *in forma pauperis*) can afford it.

Perhaps the most necessary reform of all is that the marriage of the mentally and physically unfit be legally prevented, or rather that they should be prevented from having children, which is all that really matters. It would be perfectly feasible to ensure the sterilisation of the unfit, though a law to this effect would

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require the most delicate handling, and one can hardly imagine a parliament of men blundering through it with any degree of success. Perhaps it may come to pass in the day when we have the ideal Government that represents both sexes and all classes. A health certificate signed by doctors in the service of the State should certainly be compulsory before any marriage could be ratified. When cancer, tubercle, insanity, and all the attendant ills of alcoholism and of riotous living have infected every family in the land, our far-seeing lawgivers may begin to realise the necessity for some restriction of this kind. At present, the liberty of the subject is preserved at too heavy a cost to the race.

Another much-needed reform is that children born out of wedlock should be legitimised by subsequent marriage of the parents, as in many other countries. This would hurt no one, could not possibly encourage vice, and would enable many grievous wrongs to be righted. The present regulation is unreasonable in the extreme.

England is almost the only European country where no attempt is made to provide a dowry for the daughters, except

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among the wealthy classes. Quite well-to-do Englishmen think it unnecessary to give their daughters anything during their lifetime, though they are willing to seriously inconvenience themselves to start their sons well in life. English fathers give everything to their sons; in many of the Continental countries the daughters are rightly considered first, and among all classes, rich and poor alike, the parents strive to provide some kind of a dowry for them, beginning to save from the day of the child's birth.

I feel sure that if *dots* for daughters became the custom in this country an enormous impetus would be given to marriage, and much trouble between husband and wife would be avoided if the woman had some means of her own, however small. It is surely most humiliating and unpleasant for a well-bred woman to be dependent on her husband for every omnibus fare and packet of hairpins!

English people, however, are apt to pride themselves on their faults, and are moreover so incurably sentimental that they take credit to themselves for being the exception in this respect to other countries, and boast that

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there is no inducement but love for them to marry. In the same absurd and improvident spirit is the customary disinclination to ask for settlements on our daughters. Only of very rich men is this expected, whereas it is but right that every man should make a settlement on his wife, if only of the furniture and the policy of life insurance.

A chapter on marriage reforms would not be complete without some reference to our barbarous marriage service. Is it any good complaining about it, though? Ever since I learnt to read I have been reading attacks on it; apparently no one has a good word to say for it, not even clergymen, yet still it remains in use, unamended, just as it was written in the days of James I. If ever a man-made religious formula required revising to suit the progress of ideas it is this one. How can the Church expect us to regard marriage as a sacrament when its conditions are expressed in such coarse language and from so false a standpoint. Is it not false to glorify by inference those persons who have 'the gift of continency,' a 'gift' which, if common to the majority, would soon result in the extinction of the human race? This

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special clause is a horrible insult to a pure-minded, innocent bride, and is wholly unnecessary. Surely if no other improvement is made, this opening explanation of the 'causes' for which marriage was ordained might well be omitted, if only for the fact that it places last the principal reason for marrying—*i.e.* 'for the mutual society, help and comfort.' The Church of England might well take a lesson from the Quakers or from the New Jerusalem Church, a religious community founded on the writings of that great mystic, Emanuel Swedenborg. In the case of the Society of Friends, the procedure is simple in the extreme. After a time spent in silent prayer, the parties stand and, holding hands, say solemnly in turn: 'Friends, I take this my friend, A. B., to be my *wife*, promising, through divine assistance, to be unto *her* a loving and faithful *husband*, until it shall please the Lord by death to separate us.' The New Church formula is longer, but equally beautiful and free from objectionable matter.

## II

SOME PRACTICAL ADVICE TO HUSBANDS  
AND WIVES

‘One doesn’t want a lot of fine sentiments in married life—they don’t work.’ —W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM.

THE most valuable piece of advice it is possible to give a couple starting on the ‘long and straight and dusty road’ of matrimony is: ‘Blessed are they who expect little.’ The next best is ‘Strive to realise your ideal, but accept defeat philosophically.’ It is difficult to live happily with a person who has a very high ideal of us; somehow it creates in us an unholy longing to do our worst. Miranda often says to me: ‘The reason Lysander and I are so perfectly happy is because we never mind showing our worst side to each other, we never feel we need pretend to be better than we are.’ Mark this, Bride and Bridegroom; remember a pedestal is a very uncomfortable place to settle on, and don’t assign this uncomfortable elevation to your

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life's partner. More marriages have been ruined by one expecting too much of the other than by any vice or failing.

On the other hand, at the risk of being tedious, I must repeat that the most essential thing in Marriage is respect. It is above love, above compatibility, above even the priceless sense of humour. Respect will hold the tottering edifice of matrimony together when passion is dead and even love has faded. Respect will make even the 'appalling intimacy' endurable, and will bring one through the most trying disagreements, with no bruise on the soul, whatever wounds there may be in the heart. Therefore, Bride and Bridegroom, cultivate respect between you at all costs and, men and women, never *never* marry anyone you don't really respect, however passionately you may love. I believe one can be fairly happy in marriage without love, once the ardours and madness of extreme youth have passed. Without respect one can never be anything but wretched.

'There is always one who loves and one who is beloved.' If you find you are the one who loves, remember—*it is the better part,*

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especially for a woman. Don't weary your companion with constant claims, with scenes and reproaches, tears and prayers, it will serve you no purpose, and probably only alienate the beloved from you. And, while on the subject of tears, let me urgently warn all wives against giving way to this natural feminine weakness. The sensible, hard-headed, athletic girls of to-day as a rule scorn to do so; but after marriage occasions for weeping occur that these self-reliant young spinsters never dream of. But the old idea that tears prevailed against a man, and served to soften the harder male heart, is entirely exploded; and, if women only realised it, tears distil a poison that acts as a fateful irritant to love and often causes its death. Just at first, when he is quite young and in the height of his ardour, tears may influence a man, but not for long, and very seldom after marriage. They frequently gain their end, however, as exceptionally tender-hearted men often so dread tears that they immediately concede the point at issue on the appearance of this danger-signal. But their irritation is none the less, and they often end in disliking the woman who has traded on their gentleness,

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devoted to their husbands, nevertheless make a point of invariably belittling them in private and public, and, though he would rarely admit it, this takes the heart out of a man more than one unversed in the hearts of men could possibly believe. The truth is, men like admiration and praise just as much as women do, though it is part of their strange code to conceal this. They resent a snub just as bitterly as a woman does; why shouldn't they?

And while we are on this subject, let me whisper to Persephone what a wonderfully soothing effect a little judicious flattery has on the race of husbands, and how smoothly it makes the marital wheels go round. I don't mean false, blatant, absurd flattery, such as men often bestow on us when desirous to please, not realising that compliments laid on with a trowel are an insult to one's intelligence. Nothing of that kind, of course, but delicate, subtle, loving flattery. An attitude of gentle admiration toward your Perseus, subdued a little possibly for public use, but none the less markedly appreciative, will not only endear you more to him than any protestation of your love could do, but will have an excel-

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lent effect on him mentally and morally. Just as you always feel dazzling when in company of people who admire you and always talk brilliantly when with those who think you clever, similarly Perseus will be spurred on by your admiration (real or assumed) to try to justify it.

The same thing applies to you, gallant Perseus. A compliment to your Persephone's bright eyes, a word of awed adulation for her new hat, or of praise for her conduct as a hostess will not only make her absurdly happy but will materially increase your capital in Love's Bank, by laying up treasure for you in Persephone's heart.

By way of illustration, I will quote two real conversations I heard not long ago. The first was between a young couple, Pelleas and Nicolette, who had recently started house-keeping on a small income. They had been giving an afternoon party, and all the guests had left but me. (I am a privileged person, as you must have noticed; nobody minds being natural before me.)

Nicolette heaved a sigh of relief as the front door shut for the last time, and turned with sparkling eyes to Pelleas.

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‘*Hasn’t* it been a success?’ she said enthusiastically.

‘Not bad,’ said Pelleas.

‘Aren’t the flowers lovely, and haven’t I made the rooms look sweet? Don’t you think it was all done very nicely, dear? I did work so hard!’ she added, longing for a word of praise.

‘Pooh! d’you call cutting up a few cakes work?’ was the answer.

Nicolette happens to be a discreet woman who knows when to be silent, but she looked sad, and all her natural pleasure in her little entertainment was spoiled. How delighted she would have been if Pelleas had kissed her, and told her she had made a charming hostess, and all her arrangements had been perfection. The annoying part of it is that this is what he really *did* think. He was bursting with pride of his home and his wife, and inclined to think himself a very fine fellow for having won such a charming and clever woman. Only it wasn’t his way to say so!

The second instance was when I had been trying to reconcile Geraint and his wife. I was always very fond of dear old Geraint,

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and the utter misery of his married life was a source of great trouble to me. On this occasion we talked freely, and from the depths of his sore heart he brought up woe upon woe. ‘Here’s another instance,’ he said at length. ‘It’s rather ridiculous, but you won’t laugh at me, I know. Of course it’s absurd of me to have remembered it, but—well, I have. She was sitting up in bed brushing her hair, I came into the room to ask if there was anything I could bring her from town, and I happened to stand at her dressing-table and straighten my tie. We were both reflected in the mirror and she said, suddenly, with a little laugh: “What an ugly brute you are!” . . . that’s all, she said it quite politely, but—well, it hurt me absurdly, it was so devilish unnecessary. And I suppose it’s true, too, I’d never thought of it before, but I often have since. . . .’

Yet another example of how not to do it: ‘If I’m shabby,’ a despairing wife told me once, ‘he says: “Why can’t you look decent.” When I’m smart, it’s “More new clothes! I don’t know who’s going to pay for them.” If the *menu* is exceptional he says: “This extravagance will ruin me,”

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and when it's ordinary he asks: "Is that all?"

I have previously referred to men's clubs as a boon to wives, and so they have always appeared to me. But evidently this opinion is not generally held, as a number of women have recently expressed in print their intention—when they get the vote—of agitating for complete abolition, or at least compulsorily early closing, of all men's clubs. It seems sadly ridiculous that women should want their husbands compelled by Act of Parliament to return to them at a fixed hour. Let me endeavour to convert these misguided wives, if any of them should deign to read this book.

Dear ladies, almost everything your husbands cannot get at home they can get at the club—the more completely their wants are satisfied the more pleasant they are to live with, and consequently your home is the happier! If they have a hobby, they generally join a club connected with it, or where they can meet other men similarly enslaved. Be it politics, sport, horses, cards, music, golf, or the theatre—if it is in their blood, it

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must come out, and sensible wives allow it to do so. A hobby suppressed means a hubby embittered. At the club they can have their rubber, or their rage against the Government; they can put half-a-sovereign in the sweep-stake, and compare notes about last night's grand slam and their latest bunker, or whatever the term may be. At the club they can meet other men, and have a complete change both from office and home, consequently returning to both work and wife refreshed and stimulated thereby.

When your cook has managed, by that occult secret of her own, to get the locked tantalus open and it isn't consequently convenient or possible to have any dinner at home, you remain calm, and break it to your lord on the telephone, for can he not feast royally—yet economically—at the club? And when you are away on a holiday he can do the same, and spend a pleasant evening there afterward, instead of moping about alone in the empty house. When you indulge in disagreements of a disturbing nature, if ever you do, the same friendly haven is open to him, surely a more comfortable thing for you than to have him maledicting about the house

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while the little difference is cooling off. In short, there is no end to the blessings and benefits of a man's club, and why in the world you want to abolish them, dear ladies, I for one cannot imagine.

Of course the necessary moderation should be observed, as with all other good things, and club nights once or twice a week should suffice. On these occasions the wife can have a picnic dinner—always a joy to a woman—with a book propped up before her, can let herself go and let her cook go out. Or if she be of a strenuous turn she can utilise the free evening to get her accounts and correspondence up to date. Or be her habit gay she can go out on her own account and do a little dinner and theatre with a discreet admirer, or even with a friend of her own sex. Look at it how you will, a club, provided a man does not abuse it, is an unalloyed blessing in married life.

But perhaps it is the tragic fate of the wives in question not to be able to trust their husbands, and with cause. Perhaps their hearts hold sorrowful knowledge of betrayal, and they fear that the club may be used to shield an evening spent in company less desir-

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able from the wifely point of view. Even so, the club is a blessing, for at least a woman can *hope* and try to believe her husband *is* really there, whilst if he has no club to go to, the transparency of his alternative excuse must give colour to her worst suspicions. If a man is resolved to do this sort of thing, nothing can stop him; should one pretext to spend his time away from home fail, he will put forward another, and the less chance his wife has of discovering the real state of affairs the better for her peace of mind.

That ignorance is bliss is a profound truth in married life and wives should strive to be guided by it. I believe women exist who actually make a practice of going through their husbands' pockets when opportunity offers, presumably in the expectation of finding some incriminating letter or bill. What they expect to gain in the event of an unpleasant discovery, heaven alone knows! Nothing but a more or less hateful scene, and a consequent loss of all peace between them, without the real source of the trouble being affected in the least. Fortunately few husbands are fools enough to carry compromising documents on their persons. In

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any case this surveillance is revolting, and where mutual respect exists, for which I have so strongly urged the necessity, these lapses of taste could not occur.

In justice to those unhappy women who suffer the terrible affliction of a husband given to excessive drink or gambling, I must add that, when this is the case, a wife is right to try by every means in her power to keep her husband away from his club, which offers greater opportunities than the home circle for indulging in these vices.

And now for a special word to men. On a foregoing page I mentioned the possibility of a married woman going out to dinner and the theatre with a man friend. In London life this is so usual an occurrence that any explanation of it would seem homely and a little absurd to the initiated. But the initiated are a very small section of the community, and as this book is humbly put forward for anyone interested in marriage to read—in short, for everyone who *will* read it—I propose therefore to enlarge somewhat on this theme for the benefit of the uninitiated majority. A great many men would never dream of

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allowing their wives to go out at night alone with other men; why, I cannot pretend to know, since they surely cannot insult their wives and their friends by the idea of any impropriety in connection with them. Possibly it is due to the survival of some primitive masculine feeling that they cannot explain. (In former times husbands were even more exacting, and under the Justinian code a man could divorce his wife merely for going to a circus without his consent, or for going to baths and banquets with other men!) To me it seems equally as unreasonable as women's disapproval of men's clubs. Just as a sensible wife makes no objection to her husband's club, so a wise husband allows his wife to be taken out by another man, if she desire it. If he knows anything of the feminine temperament—and no man should marry till he does—he realises that the admiration of other men is pleasing to his wife, and a little gaiety has a wonderful effect on her spirits.

I remember the time when Theodore and Amoret used to disagree violently on this point, but eventually Theodore gave way. 'He used to think it so wrong of me to like

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having other men a tiny bit in love with me,' Amoret said, 'but I explained to him that I liked it because it gave me such a nice powerful feeling and was a kind of added zest in life. Then he always said it was very dangerous for a married woman to have any zest in life apart from her husband, and I used to answer that *he* had no end of zests apart from me, and what was I to do during the long evenings when he was eternally playing bridge. Finally I promised it would make me more contented and able to bear the monotony of marriage better, if only he would let me go. He thought it was awfully wicked of me to call marriage monotonous, and said his mother would have been horrified at such a remark. I told him it was no good expecting a young wife to behave like one's mother, and he said he'd rather I didn't. Then we laughed, and the dear old boy gave in, and said that Everard was a white sort of man, and might take me out once as a trial trip. Since then I've gone to theatres with them all, and I'm fonder of Theodore the more I see of other men, and ever so much more peaceful and contented.'

Which testimony speaks for itself.

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Few seem to realise the many advantages of marrying a man of a silent habit. The ideal husband rarely talks ; he realises that women prefer to do this themselves, and that there is not room for two talking people in one happy family. The loquacious man had better look out for a silence-loving woman, and marry her immediately he finds her. Such creatures are as rare as comets, and as a rule they are generally married already to equally silent husbands—another of Nature's painful bungles. Nothing is more appalling than to have to entertain one of these speechless couples ; an over-talkative pair is infinitely preferable, as at least one can listen peacefully and let them run on.

An endless source of trouble between married couples is the money question. Wives are often extravagant and generally sinfully ignorant of financial matters at the start. Undoubtedly, as Isolda says : 'Money (and Menials) mar Matrimony.' Of the second I cannot trust myself to write, but I know that money—the want of it, the withholding of it, and the mis-spending of it—is responsible for a great deal of conjugal

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conflict. Some men seem to imagine their wives ought to be able to keep house without means, and these unfortunate women have to coax and beg and make quite a favour of it before they can obtain their due allowance. Even then they are treated like children, and their use of the money is inquired into in a most insulting manner, as if there was such a royal margin for extravagance.

I remember the case of poor little Hildebrand. He was a very young husband, and had been brought up in a very old-fashioned way. One of his quaintly mediæval notions was that woman had no financial capacity and could on no account be trusted with cash. If he had had time, I really think he would have done all the housekeeping himself. Fortunately for the peace of that family this was impossible. However, he exercised as much supervision over the *ménage* as was possible, even to the extent of looking over the tradesmen's books. Of course he did not understand their cryptic symbols in the least, and it was a funny sight to see little Hildebrand poring over the small red books, and puckering his conscientious brows in an agony of puzzlement. Every now and then he

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would turn for enlightenment to his wife, who happily possessed a very robust sense of humour.

‘What’s this, Valeria, “3 m’lade, 1½d.”?’

‘Three pounds of marmalade, dear, it’s cheap enough, surely.’

‘Too cheap to be good, I’m sure, you’d better get a superior quality.’

‘But, my dear boy, it *is* the best!’

‘Oh!’ Slightly discomfited Hildebrand would resume his study of the grocer’s hieroglyphics and presently a deep sigh would burst forth from him.

‘What’s the matter, darling? Are those wretched accounts annoying you?’ Valeria would ask sympathetically, suppressing her desire to laugh.

‘These fellows keep their books so deucedly queerly. What does this mean “1 primrose, 7½d., and 12 foreign safety, 1½d.”?’

‘One pound of Primrose candles and a dozen boxes of matches; we must have them, and it’s only 9d. anyway.’

‘That’s not the point. What’s this, “2 sunlight, 1s. 2d.”?’

‘Two boxes of Sunlight Soap for cook—it’ll last ages.’

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‘And this, “one brooks, 3d.”?’

‘Why, Brookes’ Soap, of course.’

‘Is that what we use? . . . Really I don’t see anything to laugh at.’

‘Excuse me, dear, I really couldn’t help it, the idea of *us* washing with Monkey Brand is too excruciatingly funny. Of course it’s for the pots and pans and sinks!’

‘You seem to use a great deal of soap in the house.’

‘No, dear, quite a little, as any *housekeeper* would tell you’ (Valeria could not resist this thrust), ‘and I don’t think you would like the result if we economised in soap. But why worry so, since the total is reasonable? You’ll find nothing there but absolute necessities. Why won’t you leave it all to me?’

In the end he was compelled to, but few wives would have shown Valeria’s patience under this very unnecessary infliction.

Of course this is an extreme case, but a great many men do interfere in their wives’ department to a most irritating extent. To my mind the perfect way is for the whole financial budget of the house to be left to the wife, just as the whole budget of the office or estate is left to the husband. I am

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now dealing of course with people of limited means. As a rule, a man has quite enough money worry during his day's work and does not want any more of it when he gets home. To have to sit down to write cheques in the evening is a task that seems to bring out all the worst qualities in a husband. He may enter the house a devoted lover, and heap evening papers, flowers, and chocolates on his wife's knee. During dinner he may be genial, witty, affectionate, delightful—but present him with a bundle of bills at ten P.M. with the remark that really these ought to be seen to—and at once he becomes a fierce, snarling, primitive, repulsive, and blasphemous creature. No matter if his balance at the bank be ever so satisfactory, no matter if every bill be for something he has personally required, and no single one incurred by his wife—these facts weigh not at all with him. Bills are bills, and at the sight of them husbands become savages. If I should call on Miranda one morning about the seventh or eighth of the month, I am sure to find her red-eyed and worn and to be told: 'Last night Lysander said he'd do the bills and of course he's been damning and blasting ever

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since, though they're ridiculously small this month.' Exactly the same with Isolda. 'Launcelot wrote the month's cheques last night,' she will say, 'and handling bills always has a terrible effect on him; it's a kind of disease with him, poor dear, and I never can sleep after it.' Yet both Launcelot and Lysander are in every other respect ideal husbands.

My advice to wives therefore is: Firstly, do away with all weekly or cash payments, which are a weariness to the wifely brain. Check all books once a week, examine the items with whatever degree of care your tradesmen's moral standard requires. Enter these sums in an account-book. At the end of the month, when all the bills are in, prepare a monthly balance-sheet for your husband. He will assuredly glance first at the total and should it be satisfactory he will look no further if he be wise. Let him then write one cheque to cover the whole amount, pay it into your bank, and you do the rest. When the bills arrive for rates, and whatever else is sent in quarterly, include them in your monthly list, and thus your husband will only have to write twelve cheques a year on behalf

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of his home instead of scores. The fearful frenzies that beset him monthly will thus be reduced to a minimum. If you have stables or an extensive wine-cellar give orders that the bills for these and any other item which belongs to the man's department should be sent to his office or club, together with his tailor's and other personal bills. Thus you will not suffer when their settlement becomes necessary. It is a strange fact that a man sits down like a lamb to write cheques at his office, although at home the same business would cause him to raise the roof and shake the foundations.

Volumes could be written on how to be happy though married, but my last page is at hand. To sum up therefore. Wives: if you would be happy, remember, make much of your husband, flatter him discreetly, laugh at his jokes, don't attempt to put down his club, never tell him home truths, and *never* cry.

Husbands: praise and admire your wife and let other men admire her too; don't interfere in her department; write your monthly cheque with a cheerful mien; be

## MODERN MARRIAGE

reasonable about money even if you cannot be generous, and be not overfond of your own voice.

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